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उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत

Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. LXXV APRIL 1970 No. 4

Arise! Awake! And stop not till the Goal is reached.

THE UNIVERSAL CALL OF RELIGIONS

The preferable and the pleasurable approach mankind. The man of intelligence, having considered them, separates the two. The intelligent one selects the electable in preference to the delectable; the non-intelligent one selects the delectable for the sake of growth and protection (of the body etc.).

Kaṭha Upaniṣad I.ii.2

Good men do not dispute.
The ones who dispute, are not good.
The learned men are often not the wise men;
nor the wise men, the learned.

Tao Teh King 81.1

The nobler man is calm and serene.
The inferior man is continually worried and anxious.

Analects 7.36

Ye must train yourselves thus: 'We will
increase in wisdom.'

Anguttara Nikaya 1.8.8

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.
And the knowledge of the Holy is understanding.

Proverbs 9.10

None fear God but the wise among His servants.

Koran 35.25

ONWARD FOR EVER!

Religion is the realization of Spirit as Spirit; not Spirit as matter. ... Records of great spiritual men of the past do us no good whatever except that they urge us onward to do the same, to experience religion ourselves. Whatever Christ or Moses or anybody else did does not help us in the least, except to urge us on. Each one has a special nature peculiar to himself, which he must follow and through which he will find his way to freedom. Your teacher should be able to tell you what your particular path in nature is and to put you in it. ... You should never try to follow another's path, for that is his way, not yours. When that path is found, you have nothing to do but fold your arms, and the tide will carry you to freedom. Therefore when you find it, never swerve from it. Your way is the best for you, but that is no sign that it is the best for others. The truly spiritual see Spirit as Spirit, not as matter. It is Spirit that makes nature move; It is the reality in nature. So action is in nature; not in the Spirit. Spirit is always the same, changeless, eternal. Spirit and matter are in reality the same; but Spirit, as such, never becomes matter; and matter, as such never becomes Spirit.

Vivekananda

SRI RAMA THE SUPREME EXEMPLIFIER OF APPLIED RELIGION

What the Hindu, the Indian civilization and essential religion of mankind owe to Śrī Rāma, cannot really be estimated at all. Though no one has perhaps ever taken an inventory of what Śrī Rāma has done for us, yet we seem to have been always aware of what we owed to him. So down millenniums we have cherished him in our heart, talked about him, sung his glories, chanted his name, gone on pilgrimage to places associated with his life and acts. Rāma-literature, Rāma-art, Rāma-songs, Rāma-cult, Rāma-pilgrimage, Rāma-fairs—all indicate how sincerely Indian people cherish Rāma and his acts.

It is really amazing how one person's acts and teachings could stay such a powerful living inspiration for millions of people down the ages.

In the Vālmīki-*Rāmāyaṇa* we read the prophecy of Brahma:

> 'As long as hills stand and rivers flow on earth, so long will the story of Rama be current in all parts of the world.'[1]

As time rolls on Rāma's story continues to be narrated in a larger number of human languages. *Rāmāyaṇa* stories are available not only in all the languages of India but also in numerous other languages of the world. Age of technocracy has not dimmed Rāma's popularity. Millions of people every day read or hear some literature on him, millions more constantly take his name, while rising or going to bed, in sorrow or despair, wonder or joy, on birth and death, on meeting and departing.

'Rām-Rām': this is India's most widely understood language, philosophy, inspiration and medicine for the sufferings of life.

What is the secret of Rāma's such un-

[1] Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa Bālakāṇḍa, II. 36-37.

questioned abiding hold on people's hearts, his power over changing passions and fashions of time?

One secret seems to be that Rāma fulfils everyone's dream of perfection in a most pleasing and satisfactory manner. In one person Rāma is the ideal son, ideal brother, ideal husband, ideal friend, ideal hero, ideal soldier, ideal teacher, ideal king. Man longs for an ideal to fulfil his deficiency. As the ideal, Rāma is simultaneously satisfying to diverse inner needs of man.

The second and the more important secret is that Rama is supreme exemplifier of applied religion. Everyman in his heart of hearts knows that one does not live without bread or for the matter of that by bread alone. Man needs the bread of the spirit.

And in his search for that bread he is always in difficulty. It is said: 'The core of true religion is a hidden mystery. That is the way by which the great ones have gone.'

The difficulty of the Hindu is all the more in this regard for he has the stupendous good luck of having so many scriptures which can leave a common man's little mind completely confused, as to how one should live religion in many fields of life making conflicting demands.

In this difficulty Rāma comes to man as the dynamic saviour, who acts in our world and shows how Dharma has to be lived or believed. He is no theoretician, or theologian, he is a man of action. He preaches through conduct, shows through doing that Dharma is highly practical, and withal beneficial. Indeed religion is the application in life of the highest and noblest thought of man.

Study of the phenomenon that is Rāma is done from many rewarding contexts. Our study will be simply on 'Rāma as the supreme exemplifier of applied religion.'

II

Religion is a mere word if it is not applied in life. When truth (*satya*) and righteousness (*dharma*) become involuntary habit patterns and conduct in the life of a person, that is applied religion. Of this Śrī Rāma is the supreme exemplifier, so much so that every movement or action of Rāma amounts to *satya prakasa,* revelation of truth, or *dharma pratistha* and establishment of righteousness, so much so that what Rāma does that is Dharma, what Rāma does not do that is *adharma,* negation of dharma.

It should be clearly borne in mind that applied religion does not mean a kind of watered down religion but making the true, pure and transcendental religion flow in every detail of life or making every movement of our thought and action responsive and responsible to the principles of essential religion.

In Rāma's exemplification the highest spiritual principles become like spontaneous inhalation and exhalation of breath.

What is popularly called Hinduism is basically the *sanatana dharma,* lit. eternal religion grounded in the Vedas. But the Vedic religion of the Mīmāṁsakas became so complicated and of the Upaniṣad so subtle, that the essence of religion became a mystery. Even for an educated Hindu it would not be easy to understand his religion if he were to comprehend it through the mastery of the Vedic literature.

So what became necessary was crystallization of the essence of Vedic religion. In the post-Vedic period this happened in the person of Śrī Rāma in a most marvellous and captivating manner.

In this sense Śrī Rāma is the *Veda-puruṣa.* He embodies or personifies the quintessence of the Vedas.

The highest teaching of the Vedas is that the law of sacrifice is the highest law in

the universe. This is taught through the symbology of the Puruṣa-sūkta of the Ṛg-Veda. The Supreme Being sacrificed himself to bring forth this creation and through his continuing sacrifice it is sustained. Through the principle of sacrifice the Supreme Being proliferates Himself into the beings of this visible world in which we live, move and have our being. The implication is: now if we intend to reach the Supreme Being in whom alone is all self-fufilment, we too must follow the law of sacrifice, and thus reach from the gross to the subtle, from the visible to the invisible, from the conditioned to the unconditioned.

This journey need not be dreary. It can be wholesome, gratifying and all-compensating if we pursue this law of sacrifice through righteous living. This may be called the sacramental view of life.

This sacrificial-cum-sacramental view of life constitutes the Vedic way of life. And the whole past of this heritage, Śrī Rāma quintessentially embodies in a manner which can be understood and accepted without nervous strain by every man or woman of average endowments. In this sense Rāma is the saviour of all.

III

Rāma is endowed with infinite auspicious excellences *ananta kalyāṇa guṇa*. No poet is ever satisfied with hundreds of epithets they have used for describing Rāma's qualities.

Though Rāma is worshipped as the best of *avatāras* by the devotees, he is also adored as the human personality at its best.

It is impossible to recount Rāma's qualities here but we can mention a few:

First and foremost comes Rāma's rūpa, the personal beauty and charm of his appearance. Vālmīki describes him as extremely charming to look at and gives the etymology of Rama's name as the delighter of all.

Says Vālmīki:

'He captivates the mind and heart of men by his beauty and magnanimity and is most pleasing to look at.'[2]

From the standpoint of God's mission with men, *avatāra's* mission among men, Rāma's personal charm is about the finest strategy of applied religion.

Rāma is so captivating that he compels attention, and adoration. One becomes then the captive of the deliverer. By dwelling on Rāma's form, one gets weaned away from all enticing distractions of the world; the mind becomes lovingly concentrated on the Lord and meditation becomes the spontaneous movement of the mind.

To his personal charm was added his natural majesty which easily inspired confidence.

Next to Rāma's personal beauty come the sweetness and charm of Rāma's speech. Vālmīki repeatedly says that Rāma spoke first when he met another (not being stuck up in his own importance), spoke endearingly and always prefaced his words with his beatific smile.

Tyagaraja, the mystic musician says: 'The sweetness of Rama's speech surpasses that of sugar candy.' In another song he says: 'How wonderful is your power of winning people by sweet words, suited exactly to the person addressed.'

The sweetness of Rāma's words did not depend on the art of using words. It was the natural result of his attained perfection in what has been called the austerity of speech. He always uttered such words as caused no vexation, were true, agreeable and beneficial. Besides he was

2 Ibid. II. iii 29.

the master of the Vedas and the very embodiment of Vedic dharma.

Rāma lived through critical, controversial and unusual situations of life. Through all such situations in which man easily drops truth or even decency in language, Rāma used the charm of his words in order to see that dharma prevailed. That he was the very personification of dharma was manifested through whatever happened in his life.

IV

Gold is gold all over. It is not that one particle of it could be mud. Rāma is Rāma all over. He is Rāma in fulness even in his one hour's action as through his life.

Let us now try to understand Śrī Rāma as the exemplifier of applied religion in the dramatic Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa in which a sharp turn of events put to severe test all the qualities of Rama.

Rāma, the Avatāra, does his work of *dharma saṁsthāpana,* establishment of righteousness, more through spontaneous conduct than through didactic discourse. As the world teacher he teaches more by behaving than by discoursing.

In the ultimate analysis, a teacher can impress the taught only to the extent he is, and not to the extent he talks. And what a teacher is, is best known by the manner of his carrying himself through a situation, by the ways of his reaction to the unexpected, and when he is taken unawares.

When you act on the stage the unexpected is the expected. You know something will take you unawares and you know which way you are desired by the dramatist to react.

In life however the unexpected is the unexpected : there are situations in which you are really taken unawares.

It is by his conduct through unexpected situations, when taken unaware, and also through every detail of his daily converse and actions, Rāma proves and impresses himself on everyone what he is,—that he is an embodiment of perfection of all noble qualities of head and heart, of spiritual excellences—and we are at once convinced that what he is, what he does, and what he says are one and the same.

This is the secret of Rama's sweeping and enduring influence on Indian humanity.

Rāma shows by doing. It is not even that he does for showing. You may rather say his doings show Dharma in the most convincing and unforgettable manner. In this sense among the world teachers he is the most stupendous practical genius.

When Daśaratha sent round the first feeler in regard to Rāma's prospective coronation all the advisers of the court unanimously said something significant, that Rāma never returned unsuccessful from any undertaking. In other words, Rama had proved himself to be a very practical and successful person.

What is, however, to be specially noted here is that with Rāma the ideal alone is the practical. In his doings, therefore, there is no credibility-gap between the ideal and the practical.

Rāma is an uncompromising idealist though 'he never returned unsuccessful from any undertaking.' He does not function from any lower level at all. Highest ethical and righteous conduct issues forth from him in an involuntary manner. No effort is needed for Rāma to teach about perfection for, fascinated, you just continue to look at him and you know what perfection is.

The unexpected of the worst type springs surprise on Rāma in the Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa, On the morning he was to be crowned, he

was asked to go to exile, for fulfilling the truth of his father's word, given under the infatuation of a woman. If Lakṣmaṇa could have his way he would have killed the doting old king. But how wonderful is Rāma as the ideal son, unexcelled in world's history or legend. He made no secret of his inner feelings.

With persuasive firmness Rāma said to Lakṣmaṇa :

'Your love for me and valour I know; my mother's grief, poignant as it is, takes no note of the bearings of truth and peace; father has made a promise and the word has to be kept; it is on the word of father that Kaikeyī has asked me to go. Abandon, therefore, this ignoble military mind; resort to Dharma and not to violence; follow my mind.'[3]

Seeing Lakṣmaṇa still agitated, Rāma said words which he alone knew how to speak on such an occasion. And these words substantially outline his practical philosophy of life :

'Of virtue, material gain and desire, all the three are secured by safeguarding the first, viz. virtue or Dharma; to seek only material gain or to be solely addicted to desire is not praiseworthy. Get over this insult; take your stand on good cheer; let our father save himself from the danger of transgressing truth and losing the other world. It is only by my departure that Kaikeyī will be happy. I have decided and prepared my mind for it and I do not propose to do violence on myself; I shall leave quickly. Take it that fate is responsible for this and not Kaikeyī.'[4]

Rāma knew that his own mother Kausalyā was always ill treated by Daśaratha. He knew that his father was a hen-pecked husband of Kaikeyī. Yet he said father was the visible god on earth. For he was the root to whom he owed everything. So there was nothing in the world which he would not do for his honour and pleasure.

This worshipful regard (*śraddhā*) of Rāma for parents, though we may not be aware of it, has been the spring of inspiration which has sustained our noblest family traditions and filial relationship down the ages.

When Kaikeyī snatched away his throne he did not utter one word of anger—for the simple reason that he had no anger in his heart. He simply complained that with all her authority on him she could have herself commanded him instead of bothering the King with this. He also said, one asking was enough for him. And he did not require anyone's persuasion for going to the forest.

While leaving Kaikeyī's apartment he prostrated himself before Daśaratha and also to Kaikeyī knowing fully well what she was engaged in doing. Such was his unfailing courtesy to a woman whom all Ayodhyā was cursing. Human conduct perhaps never reached anywhere a higher excellence. Vālmīki carefully points out that when Rāma heard for the first time about the exile or when he left Kaikeyī's room his natural cheerfulness was never disturbed. He was not a downcast man, but always an up-cast man.

And for this Prince used to palace luxuries and ministrations of a youthful loving wife, to just go to forest on exile on an hour's notice, as if it was going to a movie at the request of a friend who had just dropped in—what does this act of Rāma really hold before us ?

Rāma's instantaneous readiness to immediately go to the forest placed before the wondering world the highest example of several attained perfections in one stroke.

Here we find the example of absolute detachment, instantaneous renunciation,

[3] & [4] English quotations of *Valmiki Ramayana* passages are from Dr. V. Raghavan's rendering. Vide : *The Indian Heritage*, The Indian Institute of World Culture, Bangalore, 1958, p. 171.

absolute unconcern for self-interest, absolute self-sacrifice and absolute fearlessness.

No amount of discoursing, no reading of learned volumes, could make on us this impression which Rāma makes on us in this moment of truth.

The Hindu has never forgotten this and will never forget. Seeing this act of Rāma, he has taken courage down the ages to do heroic acts of application of Dharma in life.

Rāma was the master of archery, one of the most valorous persons ever known in the annals of mankind. With his powerful arrows he vanquished the evil forces.

But he was also the master of another benign weapon, which disarmed every opposition put on his way well-meaningly by those who loved him and meant him well, but could not rise to his level of thinking and understanding.

This benign weapon was his pleasing word prefaced by a smile. Rāma would not use harsh words even when wrongly addressed. As Vālmīki says: 'One may speak harsh things to him but he would not reply.'

This power of pleasing words Rāma most persuasively used to bring Lakṣmaṇa and Kausalyā to his high way of thinking and acting.

He did not want to take Sītā to the forest. Vālmīki points out that though Rāma was unshaken all through, the prospect of leaving Sītā behind did make him sorrowful. Rāma becomes understandable to us because we find that he shares our human emotions.

Sītā overpowered Rāma by her spirited oration of wifely loyalty and he was forced to take her with him to the forest. But what is to be noted here is that Rāma wanted to leave her behind for *her* sake, and when he was taking her with him it was again for *her* sake alone. Sītā convinced Rāma that it was her Dharma to share her husband's situations of life, and he could not prevent her from doing that. Rāma yielded to the persuasive force of her arguments based on righteousness knowing fully well how much more forest life would be perilous for him with Sītā by his side. Again here too we find he had no thought of self-interest in the least.

The spontaneous spirit of renunciation was so natural with Rāma, notwithstanding the fact of his being a married man of the world, that he just did not have any thought of personal gain, profit, pleasure or convenience.

Fourteen years of perilous life in the forest were complete. Sītā had been recovered after that bitter fight. On way to Ayodhyā Rāma stopped at Bharadwāja's hermitage.

Looking in the direction of Ayodhyā and falling into thought, Rāma called Hanumān and said:

> 'Go and see if all are well at the palace; first call on Guha and tell him of my welfare; he is a friend of mine whom I regard as equal to my own self; from there he will direct you to Ayodhya, where you will meet Bharata; tell him everything and report to me how he reacts to the news and what attitude he bears to me. Observe closely indications of his demeanour, speech, etc., for a kingdom like this may convert anybody's mind, and if he shows a desire for the kingdom, let him rule.'[5]

Of course Hanumān found Bharata as the truest brother-in-spirit of Rāma. But what is to be noted was that Rāma was that easily ready not to claim the throne even after fulfilling the truth of his father's boon to Kaikeyī and vindicating his honour.

Rama thus not only preserved Dharma but infuses a new spirit of dynamism in the spirit of Dharma. He not only fulfils the

[5] Ibid. p. 278.

requirements of Dharma but deluges it with abundance.

That much criticized and regretted incident of Rāma's abandonment of Sītā in the forest when she was carrying Lava and Kuśa in her womb, was indeed a mighty oblation of himself in the sacrificial fire of Dharma.

Rāma himself explained his controversial deed by these pithy words: The life of a ruler was to be guided by public duty and not by private inclination.

The world does not require proving the fact that Rama loved Sītā more than himself. Yet if Rāma put Sītā through the fire ordeal it was because gold required proving, and if he renounced Sītā after moving heaven and earth for her sake it was because Rāma loved Dharma even more than Sītā. If he were not ready to sacrifice everything, pluck out even his own heart for the sake of Dharma as he did in banishing Sītā, he would not be Rāma. He would then have been a mere hero of a comedy. We would not then worship him.

Sītā was not a mere wife of Rāma but the partner in righteousness (*saha-dharmiṇī*), the comrade in establishment of righteousness (*dharma-saṁsthāpana*). If Rāma did this in a particular way, that was the need of the time.

V

Another great quality through which Rāma's being effective as the supreme exemplifier of applied religion is made possible, is his totally unself-conscious easy accessibility (saulabhya). Though a born aristocrat, an incarnation of manifold perfections, he does not inspire awe and create distance between you and him, but he inspires love and loyalty. And loyalty to Rāma means loyalty to Dharma.

In many passages of the *Rāmāyaṇa* his remarkably easy accessibility is to be seen:

As he returns from an engagement he alights and enquires after the welfare of every citizen as if they were his own kith and kin.

His cordial accessibility is so well illustrated by his behaviour toward Guha, Sabari and the Vānaras. When after the fall of Rāvaṇa Sītā was being conducted to Rāma's presence, Vibhīṣaṇa had the monkeys lathi-charged for rushing to see Sītā for whom they had fought the bitter battle. This pained and angered Rāma and he reprimanded Vibhīṣaṇa for his high-handedness. And he asked Sītā to get down from the palanquin and walk and claimed the monkeys as his own people.

Easy accessibility was so spontaneous with Rāma that he treated everybody equally. He comes down to the level of everybody, he becomes everybody's own with all that he is. He is everybody's equal, but he stays the *arya*, the high born that he is. In other words Rāma belongs to the people in the most real and pervasive sense as an uplifting power. Hence his inspiration has been the mightiest influence for raising the moral standard of a whole nation down the ages. But for his easy accessibility this would have been an impossible dream.

VI

But Valmiki lays the greatest emphasis on Rāma's two most important virtues signified by the words *dharmātmā* whose very soul is righteousness and *satyasandha*, determined in truth.

Dharma is Rāma's very soul. And the soul of his every word, thought and action is dharma. It is mainly for the exemplification of the ways of Dharma that Rāma assumed the human form.

Dharma in Rāma's ministry became dynamic action, sometimes even contro-

versial action. Eyebrows have been raised as to the propriety of the killing of Vali. Why Rāma did not hesitate to shed blood when saving the soul was the question.

Sexual immorality is one of the most corrupting factors which destroys the moral fibre of a people. Rāma became the supreme exemplifier of the sexual purity by his inspiring practice of absolute fidelity to one wife for all life (*ekapatnitva*). When Bharata returned from his maternal uncle's house, he asked Kaikeyi why Rāma had been banished to the forest and whether he had violated the person of any woman. Kaikeyī told Bharata: 'Others' wives Rāma does not even see with his eyes.'

One who was working at the very roots of a religious culture of a people for its betterment had therefore to do something exemplary by way of absolutely repudiating the practice of incest in any form. And Vāli was guilty of it.

Besides, to die at the hands of Lord incarnate on earth was not destruction but liberation. Rama had the divine authority to devise his own means of establishing dharma, and liberating souls. He does not sentimentalize on piety but he revolutionizes religion and the pursuit of it.

In his treating Rāvaṇa in the warfield, Rāma evinced the most magnanimous heart. When Rāvaṇa was nearly defeated he asked him to go and return refreshed. When Vibhīṣaṇa refused to perform Rāvaṇa's obsequies, he said he would himself perform it.

How can we ever forget these acts of genuine charity, after having once seen them being practised at those crucial hours of life?

Last but not the least comes Rāma's devotion to truth. Rāma did not speak twice; once he spoke he carried it out and he did not go back upon his word. Nothing in the world, no weight of authority, no lilt of language, no persuasion of sentiment, no fear of uncertainty, no prospect of insecurity, could influence Rāma to deviate from truth.

When Bharata came to Citrakuta with all his counsellors, and so to say with all Ayodhya, to persuade Rāma to return, Rāma was match for everyone and more. With sweet reasonableness he proved how the best course for everyone's well-being lay in treading the path of truth without equivocation.

One of the counsellors, sage Jābāli, tried to use materialistic arguments to see if Rāma could somehow be induced to return. Rāma repudiated his arguments and defined his own position in memorable words:

> 'Character alone reveals a man. Truth and kindness form the eternal principles of kingly conduct; the state embodies truth; the world is based on Truth; Truth is all in all; prosperity goes only with Truth; there is nothing greater than Truth; not out of avarice, not out of delusion, not out of ignorance, will I break the bounds of truth. That policy which the low, the cruel, avaricious and the criminal resort to, I shun as vice in the cloak of virtue. With my five senses contented, I lead my life in this world, without deceit, with faith in values, and with competence to distinguish right from wrong.'[6]

This thunder of Rāma is on our head, on our soul, on our conscience.

He calls them low, avaricious, cruel and criminal who knowingly resort to untruth in any form; low, because such a person cannot find the higher path; avaricious, because he is devoid of self-control; cruel, because he inflicts great pain and suffering on himself and others; criminal, because he does the worst dacoity, dacoity on the welfare of society.

Today our relativization of values has reached to such a low level that many of

[6] Ibid. p. 191.

us cannot just any more tell the right from the wrong, truth from untruth. Nothing disturbs our moral sense, for that sense is dead altogether. If we do not have a moral sense we cannot have a civic sense. And if we go to have a democracy without civic sense, we have the government of a type under which a civilization tends to disintegrate. They are not to blame, however. For are they not all our representatives? Indeed they are!

Rāma said: I live with my five senses contented. And none of our senses are contented, they are burning with the fire of lust, as the Buddha said in his famous fire sermon.

Rāma said: I have faith in values. Well we too do have tremendous faith but mostly in the two lower values of *artha* (wealth) and *Kama* (pleasure). Our five year plans which are devoid of concern for *dharma* (righteousness) or *moksa* (liberation of the spirit) will tell us the story.

Rāma said: I live with competence to distinguish right from the wrong. And with most of us there is no more anymore dividing line between them!

Rāma said he would never forsake Truth and Dharma, for any prize here or hereafter, and the first things we are ready to drop under the slightest provocation or temptation are Truth and Dharma.

VII

We in India are today passing through the travail caused by our massive deviation from the clear simple principles of applied religion which Rāma taught us so convincingly through his supreme exemplification.

In a beautiful way saint Tyāgarāja sums up in a song the essence of Rāma's personality as matchless prowess, chastity and truth of words. As he puts it, 'one arrow, one woman and one word'—these three constitute the personality of Rāma.

Let us have all the power and strength we need and also all the wisdom and self-control to use that power for the good of all humanity. Let us recapture in this land chastity, the supreme devotion to the value of chastity which is the root of all spiritual knowledge and power. Let us be truthful in thought, word and deed, then prosperity on all levels will be round the corner.

Devotees of Rāma are not a few in the country. But many of us are satisfied with the ceremonial piety of singing the holy name and glories of Rāma. To the extent we do that it is good no doubt.

But infinitely more we would gain—and there is the greatest need for this gain as we are called upon to live through the most demanding times of history—if we would practise the five simple principles of applied religion which Rāma taught by living:

1. Purity of personal life,
2. Strength and fearlessness,
3. Ethical conduct through all situations of life,
4. Sacrificial and sacramental living,
5. Truthfulness.

Let us combine our devotion to Rāma with the practice of the spiritual principles exemplified by Rāma. And this world will not then be large enough to contain our beneficent power.

LETTERS OF A SAINT

THE LORD MY REFUGE

Kankhal
25th Bhadra

Dear Sri —

I have received your post card dated the 25th Bhadra. I am sorry to learn that you have not been keeping very well. I hope, by the Lord's grace you are doing well now, and so your mother and all others.

My health continues to be in the same state. Not much improvement is being seen of sleeplessness and other symptoms. I have never used opium. My doctor friends are also advising me that use of opium will be helpful, but I am absolutely unwilling to go under the influence of opium. The body is not everlasting; why then should I, without reason, give indulgence to an abominable habit?

Our study of *Śrimad Bhagavadgītā* was completed on the last *Dwadasi*[1] day. I have now started again to study the Vedanta-Darsana[2] with Sankara's commentary. You have asked me to write about the inner import of the *Gītā*. Perhaps you know what our Master Sri Ramakrishna used to say about this. He used to say: if you repeat the word *Gītā* several times you can comprehend its meaning. In other words, if you repeat *Gī-tā-Gī-tā-Gī-tā* you get *Tā-gī-Tā-gī-Tā-gī*, which means *tyāgī*, that is to say: renunciation is the essence of the *Gītā*. By studying the *Gītā* what one really understands is that total surrender to God is assuredly the teaching of the *Gītā*. Some say that the *Gītā*-view is the observance of *swadharma* (one's specific personal religion) through desireless surrender of the fruits of work to God. I say, if one is able to do this, what is there higher than this? The Lord Himself is saying:

यत्करोषि यदश्नासि यज्जुहोषि ददासि यत् ।
यत्तपस्यसि कौन्तेय तत्कुरुष्व मदर्पणम् ।।

'Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer in sacrifice, whatever you give away, whichever austerity you practise, O son of Kunti, do that as an offering unto Me.'[3]

In other words, whatever you do, O son of Kunti, offer everything unto Me, which means: do not keep anything whatsoever for yourself. But is it easy to accomplish this? This calls for a great deal of unremitting efforts; this is not easily done. Yet there is no reason to be despondent. The Lord has said:

'अनेकजन्मसंसिद्धस्ततो याति परां गतिम्'

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[1] The twelfth day after the full moon or new moon is called *'dvādaśī'* in the Indian calender.

[2] Here the author means *Vedānta Sūtras.*

[3] *Bhagavad-Gītā* IX. 27

'... gradually gaining perfection through many births, he then reaches the highest goal.'[4] If the goal is not attained in this birth, it will be attained in the next; only, we must not forget the goal. One has to go on practising (the spiritual disciplines). Thus one day one will most certainly succeed. In his last birth a man will be born with divine qualities (*daivī sampat*)[5] and all his inner tendencies will be good in that birth and he will surely realize God. Self-surrender to God, complete renunciation of one's ego—this is the quintessence of the *Gītā*. This is my view. To become entirely His, and not to depend in the least on oneself or anyone else—this indeed is the essential teaching of the *Gītā*. The human life becomes blessed by being able to do this in whichever way one can. The Lord is very kind; if one can depend on Him, everything else He gets done—He has made this promise in the *Gītā*. The essence of the *Gītā* is: न मे भक्तः प्रणश्यति 'My devotee never perishes.'[6] न हि कल्याणकृत् कश्चित् दुर्गतिं तात गच्छति। 'The doer of good never comes to grief.'[7]—this is also an essential teaching of the *Gītā*.

My love and best wishes for you. Please convey the same to Bi...... and He...... What has happened to He......'s project of going to England? I desire to know what he is doing now.

Sri Turiyananda

4 Ibid, VI. 45
5 Ibid, XVI. 1, 2, 3
6 Ibid, IX. 31.
7 Ibid, VI. 40.

EXHORTATIONS TO THE YOUTH OF INDIA

Swami Vireswarananda

All over the country since independence there has been a great deal of enthusiasm among our young men to rebuild our nation. It is very commendable. But then, before one takes up this work one must have a clear idea of the India that is to be. A painter, for example, does not immediately begin to put colours on the canvas. Such a method will not produce a good picture. He will have to think well and have a clear picture of what he intends to paint and then only he can transfer to the canvas what he has conceived in his mind. Similarly an engineer does not right away begin constructing a building. He first tries to know what sort of building it is to be. Is it meant for a school or a hospital or a public office or a residence? Then, according to the requirements he draws a plan and works out every detail and then begins the construction work. So you too must have a clear picture of the future India and then begin building the nation. Are you going to make India a great military nation? I am sure you are not, for no military power has lived long. Just see the fate of Hitler and Mussolini. Will you then make your country a wealthy one like America, industrialized and highly advanced in agriculture?

We are a poor nation and we want wealth to be able to feed our masses. But will mere bread and butter solve our problem? Have America and other advanced nations peace of mind and true happiness in spite of their wealth? They do not have. Look at the young people, children of affluence, boys and girls, who feel frustration with nothing to achieve in life, wandering about. Some of them are very very rich, but often they feel a sort of terrible purposelessness having no goal in life. We want military strength to protect our freedom and not to rob our neighbours, we want wealth to feed our masses who are poor, but this cannot be the ideal of the nation. Something more is required besides these two. What is that which will bring peace to us along with wealth and power?

I will advise you to go through our ancient history and see how great India was in power, wealth and happiness during the times of Asoka, Chandragupta, Kanishka and others. During the Vedic period and during the Buddhist period evidently we had great ideals that could make India so great in the past. But then how has this degeneration come about? We have to find out the causes that led to our down-fall. So in constructing future India we must accept the ideals that made us great, reject what caused degeneration and supply newly what was not there, at that time, viz. science and technology.

We nowadays swear by science. We say it is not scientific, it is superstitious. But is it scientific to ignore altogether our past, not caring to know what good it contained and what has sustained us as a nation for the last three thousand years, and to run after western ideas which have not stood the test of time, which are at best two hundred years old and some of recent times? Have these ideals solved the problem of the western nations? Are they happy and at peace? They do not seem to be. So why go after those ideals?

My young friends, we are human beings. God has given us reason to be used, and not to allow ourselves to be driven like cattle by anyone and everyone who comes

and tells us some thing vehemently. So, I advise you to gather all materials, all information about our past and present, think well, and plan the future. Don't be led by emotion.

First of all the most necessary thing is character. Without character nothing great can be achieved. Look at Mahatmaji. See how by his character he swayed the nation and forced England to quit India. He did not use guns, atom-bombs, etc. So if you want to make India great, build your character first, and then use your reason and find out what sort of India you want to build and then begin to work for it, even if it means sacrificing your life for it. For this kind of study, Swami Vivekananda's works will be a guide book to you to introduce you to the greatness of Indian culture and ideals.

TOWARD THE GOAL SUPREME

Swami Prabhavananda

There is a Hindu legend that tells of Mother Durgā, the mother of the universe, and her two children—Kārtika and Ganeśa. Kārtika is out-going, the God of world-success and prosperity; he is also the god of warriors. Ganeśa is contemplative, his mind is inward, devoted to Divine Mother. One day the Mother held a priceless necklace before her two sons and announced: 'Whichever of you goes around the universe and comes back to me first will receive this treasure.'

Kārtika confidently began the journey in a space-ship, certain that he would win the treasure. However, Ganeśa seemed in no hurry and he took his time. Slowly he walked around the Mother and then bowed down before her. Mother Durgā gave *him* the necklace.

When Kārtika returned, to his amazement, he found Ganeśa wearing the treasure. This legend could be said to be symbolical of our present position in the world today. Kārtika and Ganeśa, though opposite in tendencies, are both children of Divine Mother. Kārtika could be said to represent time and technology and Ganeśa religion or spiritual life. Kārtika probes the outward universe—Ganeśa probes the inner universe.

Within a very few years' time, technology has made tremendous progress. What was considered only yesterday science-fiction, today has become a reality. Millions of people all over the world witnessed with a thrill as man walked on the moon.

In time, I believe, we shall be able to explore other planets and perhaps we shall be able to communicate with human beings like ourselves.

We must also remember that Kārtika is a God of warriors as well as of technology. We are all aware that there is constantly hanging over us a thermo-nuclear cloud of destruction capable of destroying all human life. This *cloud* is also a result of human intelligence—of Kārtika's power. It is human intelligence that has wrought this peril and from where does this intelligence come? It comes from God, from Divine Mother.

There is fire. We can cook our meal with the fire, or we can burn down our house. It can be constructive or destruc-

tive. It is not the fault of the fire. It is the fault of those who use it.

Still, I am not a pessimist. I do not believe that this thermo-nuclear *cloud* will burst. Every nation with this power must be aware that it would be a suicidal policy to use it. They would destroy themselves along with the rest of the world. Furthermore, I see a good sign—the revolt of youth everywhere in the world. Parents and the older generation, who wish to preserve their way of thinking and behaving—their world—believe their children are acting irrationally and sometimes cruelly. Yet one thing is apparent—there is a total rejection of materialism! Youth sees that their parents have made money, have social position; but are they happy? No! There is a demand among the young for a higher goal. No matter how misled and misguided they may be, behind all that, there is this strong reaction to reject materialism and to demand a higher goal of life—a supreme goal.

And here we find the introspective wisdom of Gaṇeśa coming to the forefront—reacting against the current predominance of Kārtika's technological power. As a result, we have this greater urge for spiritual life amongst the younger generation.

With regard to probing the *inner* universe—it is not a new frontier—it has already been explored. Exemplars are not wanting. Every religion in this world has produced great spiritual giants or mystics. They have cleared the path for us. We have only to follow. However, in order that we may follow, we must know exactly *what* that goal of life is. Is it the acceptance of certain dogmas and beliefs and doctrines? Is it to go out in the world and *do good*? Can we only *do good* to the world with our hands? These are the things to consider. Spiritual life or spiritual pursuit is not something blind and purposeless. It is not something that we will achieve in the next life. It has a specific end to achieve and a definite goal to attain. And that goal *has* to be attained. In the words of the Upaniṣads: 'Here and now, not after the death of the body.' The spiritual aspirant must think for himself, clearly and definitely; he must understand what that goal is, for only then will the pursuit of spiritual life be meaningful.

What *is* that goal? All scriptures and all religions, without any exception, define that goal as 'the fulfillment of one's life.' And if we use our common sense—which at times seems to be so un-common—we would have to come to the same conclusion. No one could argue with that goal; everyone wants *fulfillment*.

In this connection, just a few months back, a clergyman came to visit the Vedanta Temple in Hollywood. One of our nuns asked him: 'Sir, please tell us what you think is the goal of life.' And his answer was: 'The fulfillment of *human* aspirations.' Did he mean, he was asked, by 'fulfillment of human aspirations', finding a beautiful wife, acquiring prosperity and name and fame? These are certainly human and natural aspirations! But when you have fulfilled all these 'human aspirations', what have you got? Does not frustration come in the end? Where is the fulfillment?

No. Fulfillment comes when we realize the eternal, the unchangeable reality amongst the non-eternals of life, when we attain that highest abiding joy in the midst of the fleeting pleasures of life.

Then the clergyman said: 'I do not believe that there is any unchangeable reality.' Saying so he refuted the existence of God. For what is God? What is Christ? Call *that* God or Christ or Atman, the Self within! Names do not make any difference. Where is that unchangeable reality? It is all within ourselves!

God, that Reality, is not 'way out there in the blue somewhere' as many people half-heartedly believe. Which reminds me of the time I was listening to the radio as a minister spoke. He said: 'Do you know how God listens to our prayers? Just as you tune in your radio, God has his radio tuned in way up in heaven.'

No. He is *not* out 'there somewhere.' The kingdom of God is *within*.

There is a story in the Upaniṣads. Nārada, a spiritual aspirant, went to Sanatkumāra, who was a knower of Brahman, and said to him: 'Holy sir, I studied science, logic, philosophy, scriptures; I have studied all branches of learning, but I find no peace. I have studied all this, but the Self I do not know. I have heard from great teachers like you that he who knows the Self or God within, overcomes grief. Grief has been my lot. Show me the way to overcome grief and find that peace which is beyond understanding.'

Then Sanatkumāra began to teach him. After much discussion, he gave this truth: 'The Infinite is the source of joy there is no joy in the finite. The Infinite is immortal, the finite is mortal. One who knows, meditates upon, and realizes the truth of the Self, the Infinite Being, such a one delights in the Self, revels in the Self, rejoices in the Self. He becomes master of himself and master of all the worlds. Slaves are they who know not this truth!'

Now the question is what is the proof of the existence of the Self, or Atman or God? Can our reason or intellect prove that existence? One great seer-philosopher of India pointed out that you can give proof in scientific terms for the existence of God; again there are other intellectuals who through logic, through reasoning, can prove the non-existence of God. In fact, in India there has been a great philosopher, Kapila, who said, 'There is no God, because there is no proof for the existence of God.'

Where is the real proof? Can it be found in scriptures? In the scriptures we read that Christ or Moses, Kṛṣṇa or Ramakrishna, or the great seers of the Upaniṣads had experienced God. But does that satisfy us? No. If you are hungry and another eats food, does that satisfy your appetite? When someone is sick, and you take the medicine for him, does that cure the patient?

Truth can be known through two methods. One method is direct perception through the senses. That is one proof. From the data we take in through our senses, we *infer* something to be true. This is the *empirical* method. But God cannot be known or seen through the senses. Our senses can only *infer* that He exists.

Many philosophers in the West have come to the unknown from the known; they have proved the existence of God, or the Absolute, but here is the question: What guarantee is there that their *idea* of God agrees with the reality of God? After all, it is only an *idea* of God that is proved.

So there is another kind of proof and that is *spiritual* proof, which is perceived through the subtle supersensuous power of Yoga. In the *Bhagavad-Gītā* we read how Śri Kṛṣṇa tells his disciple Arjuna: 'You cannot see God with these eyes, but I shall give you divine sight.' That divine sight has to be opened. It is possible. It is latent in every one of us. To quote the Psalmist: 'Lord, open Thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.' *Open my eyes*! The eyes have to be opened. Pray, pray with a longing, yearning heart for the truth of God. Direct perception is possible; that is the only proof for the existence of God.

As the seers of the Upaniṣads, as well as great seers in other countries point out:

'I have known the Truth.' Also they tell us: 'Ye also shall know the Truth, then only you can attain freedom and immortality'. In the Upaniṣads we read: 'Brahman may be realized while yet living in this ephemeral body. To fail to realize Him is to live in ignorance, and therefore subject to birth and death. The knowers of Brahman are immortal; others, knowing Him not, continue in the bonds of grief.'

A question may arise. Those who claim to have known God, to have seen God, are in the minority. Very few in any age have had the direct experience of God. How do we know that they are not deluded? Perhaps Christ or Buddha was deluded; perhaps they were insane. At times they behaved like psychotics. But study their lives, their characters. Pure! Look at the power behind them! Here the majority does not prove the truth; though a majority can elect a president, a majority cannot elect God!

These God-men are in the minority because very few consciously desire that Reality—very few want God! My Master once said: 'People's minds are busy with trivial things. Who wants the real treasure?' One time he said: 'We have the treasure to offer, but people only come to get potatoes, onions and eggplants.' Then he said: 'They have time for all kinds of worldly works, but when it comes to spiritual effort, they say: "Where is the time for it!"' It is what Buddha called the greatest sin—laziness. Through the grace of the Lord, one can be granted a combination of three things: human birth, the desire for the truth of God (or desire for liberation) and the grace of a Guru, an illumined teacher. If one has that intense longing, that desire, then even God comes down in human form to teach him. The one thing necessary is that longing, that desire.

If we understand the words of Jesus properly, we shall find he says the same thing: 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God.' What does to be born of water and of the spirit mean?

One does not receive rebirth of the spirit by merely being dipped into water, or by being sprinkled with it. No. Being born of water, of the spirit is what we call in Vedanta *initiation*. A power is transmitted by the teacher to the disciple in the form of a seed-word—but the word must come from the lips of a man of God. Then as you chant that holy word, gradually you are born in spirit. But it is necessary that you have, initially, *Viveka* or discrimination. You have to convince yourself—no matter how your mind naturally runs after worldly things—that God is the *only* treasure, which 'no moth can eat', as Jesus says. *He* is the one treasure. You have to be convinced—in spite of your worldly tendencies—that 'flat, tame and unprofitable are the uses of the world.' You have to come to that understanding. You have to be convinced.

What are the methods? Sri Ramakrishna pointed out: 'As many religions, so many paths.' There is a saying, 'All roads lead to Rome,' but to *reach* Rome must be your goal. So all religions lead you to that one goal which is God, but God must be the goal of your life. Not after death—here and now. You do not have to be born again in the womb to be reborn. While living now you can be reborn in Spirit.

The way is through meditation, prayer, and a concentrated mind. To quote the words of the great seer-philosopher Śankara: 'Faith, devotion, and constant union with God through prayer, these are declared to be the seeker's direct means of

liberation.' You may believe in dogmas or no dogmas but you need these three things: faith, devotion and constant union with God through prayer. 'Pray without ceasing'.

Faith. First it is necessary to have *working faith* in the scriptures and in what a man of God teaches you. And at the same time, you have to have faith in *yourself*. My Master said to me: 'Others have realized God, why can't you?'

In order to develop faith in yourself, in order to have devotion, you have to have *interest*. You have to be sincerely interested in God; and interest comes, devotion comes, as you continue to meditate upon Him. This constant remembrance of God, does not mean that we have to give up action, work or the duties of life. No! Continue to work. But through work, through action, you also have to keep union with God. As Śri Kṛṣṇa said: 'Mentally resign all your actions to me. Man attains to highest perfection by worshipping me, by performing his respective duties.' If the heart and soul are fixed in God—work is worship. Again Śri Kṛṣṇa says: 'All that he does is offered before me in utter surrender. My grace is upon him. He finds the eternal, the peace unchanging.'

Now here is an important question: What to meditate upon? God. But what is God? Any idea, any conception of God that you may have is true. For instance, if the child says 'da, da, da,' and cannot utter the word *father*, does not the father know? God is impersonal. He is personal. You see the ocean, formless, infinite, and then again, through intense cold, the ocean forms icebergs. The Divine Incarnations, Kṛṣṇa, Christ or Buddha, are like the icebergs; through them also, you can reach the Infinite, that ocean of bliss, that ocean of existence, that ocean of immortality.

Often people imagine that worshipping the personal aspect of God is a lower form of worship than the impersonal aspect. It makes no difference; choose any aspect that appeals to you. Infinite is God, infinite are His aspects. The personal God is the same as the impersonal.

There is a saying: 'He who is Rama, who was the son of Daśaratha, is again dwelling in the hearts of all beings.' Śri Kṛṣṇa said: 'I am the Atman, Self, that dwells in the heart of every mortal creature. Who truly knows me, in manifold being, everywhere present and all-pervading, dwells in my Yoga that shall not be shaken. Of this be certain.'

Christ said: 'I and my Father are one.' Then he said: 'He who hath seen me hath seen the Father.' Whatever may be your Chosen Ideal, try to have constant union with Him, constant remembrance of God. 'Pray unceasingly.'

Through action, also, as it has been pointed out, you can keep that union with God. In the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* we read: 'When the senses are purified the heart is purified; when the heart is purified, there is constant and unceasing remembrance of the Atman or Self. When there is constant and unceasing remembrance of the Self—all bonds are loosed, and freedom is attained.'

How can the senses be purified: Live in the world; work, but work with the spirit of worship. There are two steps: First we must learn to offer the fruits of our action to God. You perform an action not for gain, but in order to offer the fruit of that action to God. If you ask for the fruit of the action, you receive *finite* results; but if you offer the fruit to God you receive the *Infinite*—God. Offer every action to God.

Secondly, see Brahman, see God in every action. Maharaj—Swāmi Brahmānanda—

said to us one time: 'Do your duties in the world, while taking your refuge in the Lord.' It is only when we directly perceive or experience God, that our lives become *fulfilled.* It is then that we achieve 'the fulfilment of life.' And with this fulfilment comes freedom from grief, from suffering. *There* is the immortal bliss!

But what about this world? What about humanity? Are we not selfish? Often critics of Vedanta tell us: 'Yes, you meditate, but why don't you do something for others?'

My master one time taught me this truth: 'Meditate, meditate, meditate, and then your heart will go out in sympathy and compassion for all beings. You will feel that these people are suffering for no reason, when there is the mine of bliss within each one of them.'

Śri Kṛṣṇa pointed out, as did Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda: You cannot help humanity. Who are you to help? Many times by trying to help others we do more harm than good. But you can *serve.* Serve God in man. That is the ideal. Humanism does not work. What did the Bible teach? The First Commandment is: 'Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.' His Second Commandment is: 'Love thy neighbour as thyself.'

You cannot love your neightbour as yourself without loving God. Both must go together. Again Śri Kṛṣṇa points out: 'That Yogi sees me the same Lord in all things, and all things within me. He never loses sight of me, nor I of him. He is established in union with me, and worships me devoutly in all beings. That Yogi abides in me, no matter what his mode of life.'

Then he says:

'Who burns with the bliss
And suffers the sorrow
Of every creature
Within his own heart,
Making his own
Each bliss and each sorrow:
Him I hold highest
Of all the Yogis.'

MOTHERHOOD OF GOD AS REVEALED BY SRI RAMAKRISHNA—II

(His own words on the Topic)

(Continued from the previous issue)

SWAMI TAPASYANANDA

In the conversations of Sri Ramakrishna recorded in the Gospel, we find many striking imageries and thoughts throwing a flood of light on the Master's conception of Divine Motherhood. A string of quotations of such passages from the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*[1] will be helpful for a better understanding of his conception of the Divine Mother: 'Kālī is none other than Brahman ...,' he says 'She is the Primal Energy. When that Energy remains inactive, I call It Brahman, and when It creates, preserves, or destroys, I call It Śakti or Kālī. ... They are like fire and its power to burn. ... If one recognizes Kālī, one must also recognize Brahman; again if one recognizes Brahman one must recognize Kālī. Brahman and Its Power are identical. It is Brahman whom I address as Śakti or Kālī.' (p. 661).

'When there was neither the creation, nor the sun, the moon, the planets and the earth and when darkness was enveloped in darkness, then the Mother, the Formless One, Mahā-Kālī, the Great Power was one with Mahā-Kāla, the Absolute.' (p. 59) 'After the destruction of the universe, at the end of a great cycle, the Divine Mother garners the seeds for the next creation. ... Housewives have pots like that where they keep "sea-foam", blue pills, small bundles of seeds of cucumber, pumpkin, gourd, and so on. They take them out when they want them. In the same way, after the destruction of the universe, my Divine Mother, the Embodiment of Brahman, gathers together the seeds for the next creation. After the creation the Primal Power dwells in the universe itself. She brings forth this phenomenal world and then pervades it. In the Vedas creation is likened to the spider and its web. The spider brings the web out of itself and then remains in it. God is the container of the universe and also what is contained in it. ... The Divine Mother is always playful and sportive. This universe is Her play. She is self-willed and must always have Her own way. She is full of bliss. She gives freedom to one out of a hundred thousand ... She wants to continue playing with Her created beings. In a game of hide-and-seek the running about soon stops, if in the beginning all the players touch the "granny". ... That displeases Her. Her pleasure is in continuing the game. So the poet sang: "Out of a hundred thousand kites, at best but one or two break free. And, Thou, O Mother, dost laugh and clap Thy hands, watching them." It is as if the Divine Mother said to the human mind in confidence, with a sign in Her eye, "Go and enjoy the world." How can one blame the mind? The mind can disentangle itself from worldliness if, through Her grace, She makes it turn toward Herself. Only then does it become devoted to the Lotus Feet of the Divine Mother.' (pp. 59-61).

On the question of the ethical implications of Śakti worship, Sri Ramakrishna's teachings are very significant. He men-

[1] Tr. by Swami Nikhilananda, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras, 1944.

tions the sexo-mystic rites of the Vāmācāra School of Śāktas, but mentions it only to discourage people from following such paths. It was never his wont to condemn any path of discipline that devotees had adopted in faith and sincerity, and knowing as he did that there have been some genuine aspirants even among these, he was not for condemning it downright. But he described it as the 'scavenger's path' to the mansion, and warned aspirants against it.

'One must propitiate the Divine Mother, the Primal Energy, in order to obtain God's grace', he says. 'God Himself is Mahāmāyā who deludes the world with Her illusion and conjures up the magic of creation, preservation and destruction. ... We can go into the inner chamber only when She lets us pass through the door. Living outside, we see only outer objects, but not the Eternal Being, Existence, Knowledge, Bliss Absolute. Therefore it is stated in the Purāṇa that deities like Brahmā praised Mahāmāyā for the destruction of the demons Madhu and Kaitabha. ... This Primal Energy has two aspects : Vidyā and Avidyā. Avidyā deludes. It conjures up "woman and gold" which casts the spell. Vidyā begets devotion, kindness, wisdom and love, which lead one to God. This Avidyā must be propitiated and that is the purpose of the rites of Śakti worship. The devotee assumes various attitudes towards Śakti in order to propitiate Her: the attitude of a "handmaid", a "hero", or a "child". A hero's attitude is to please Her even as a man tries to please a woman.' (p. 40). 'One must worship the Ādyāśakti. She must be protitiated. She alone has assumed all female forms. Therefore I look upon all women as mother. The attitude of looking on woman as mother is very pure. The Tantra mentions the Vāmācāra method also. But that is not a good method ; it causes the aspirant's downfall. A devotee keeping an object of enjoyment near him has reason to be afraid. Looking on woman as mother is like fasting on Ekādaśī day without touching even a drop of water. In this attitude there is not the slightest trace of sensual enjoyment. Another way of observing Ekadasi allows the taking of fruit and the like. One can also observe the day by eating luchi and curds. ... I worshipped the 'Ṣoḍaśī' (a ritual worship of the Mother in which a youthful woman forms the symbol of the Mother) as my mother. I looked on all parts of her body as those of my mother. This attitude of looking on God as Mother is the last word in Sādhanā. "O God, Thou art my Mother and I am Thy child"—this is the last word in spirituality.' (p. 628).

Speaking about the glory of this Mother concept and its great potency in awakening the spiritual tendency in man he says : 'One acquires love and devotion quickly by calling on God as Mother.' (p. 947) 'Pray to the Divine Mother with a longing heart. ... The craving for worldly objects ('woman and gold') is conquered instantly if you think of Her as your own Mother. She is by no means a godmother. She is your own mother. With a yearning heart persist in your demands on Her. The child holds to the skirt of its mother and begs a penny of her to buy a kite. Perhaps the mother is gossiping with her friends. At first she refuses to give the penny and says to the child "No, you can't have it. Your daddy has asked me not to give you money. When he comes I will ask him about it. You will get into trouble if you play with a kite now." The child begins to cry and will not give up his demand. Then the mother says to her friends, "Excuse me for a moment. Let me pacify this." Immediately she unlocks the cash-box with a click and gives the child what he wants. You too must force your demand on the

Divine Mother. ... What I mean to say is that God is our very own. We can exert force on Him.' (pp. 556-57)

To quote another beautiful imagery of his regarding the Divine Mother's redeeming activity: 'Men weep jugful of tears for children, wife, money, etc., but who weeps for God? So long as a child remains engrossed in play with its toys the mother engages herself in cooking and other household works. But when the little one finds no more satisfaction in toys, throws them aside and weeps out with a loud cry for the mother, the mother can remain no longer in the kitchen. She drops down the rice pot, perhaps, from the hearth, and runs in hot haste to the child and takes it up in her arms.'

That even the lowest of us has such a Mother, all-powerful and overflowing with love and beneficence, is the happy tidings that Sri Ramakrishna brings to mankind.

(Concluded)

A FEW WORDS ON THE EPIPHANY AND GREATNESS OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA

SRI KAILAS CHANDRA KAR

The middle of the nineteenth century was a period of storm and stress for India—a period of struggle not only for political emancipation which culminated in the War of Indian Independence of 1857 commonly known as the Sepoy Mutiny, but also for the preservation of the Hindu Religion and culture against the gilt and glitter of the materialistic ideals of the West on the one hand and the all too formal and lifeless professions of religion by Hindu scholars on the other. It was at this juncture that Sri Ramakrishna appeared on the scene to save the situation from this double danger —external as well as internal.

The unsophisticated life and gospel of Sri Ramakrishna stand out significantly and have a spontaneous appeal to our heart by virtue of their naturalness. He lived a basically rural and God-intoxicated life in the suburbs of the metropolitan city of Calcutta, the stronghold of Westernism at the time. Being almost illiterate, he had not the opportunity to tincture his mind by a study of the religious lore. But the life he lived and the doctrines he preached reflected and sometimes even transcended the scriptures, thus bearing an unprejudiced testimony to the truth contained in them. His mind constantly dwelt on a highly spiritual plane and as the psyche has always a great influence on the physique, his material body also was spiritualized to an extent not heard of in the history of man. His psychic principle consisting in a deep-rooted aversion for money was, therefore, attended with a corresponding physical reaction in the shrinking of his muscles from the touch of it. The tests to which he was subjected in this respect by Narendranath (before he became Swami Vivekananda), who represented the scientific outlook of the age, are only too well known to need any recountal here. His teachings in a plain and pithy language with illustrations culled from common experiences of everyday life went straight into the heart and dispelled the gloom of doubts

and ignorance like the rays of the rising sun. All these were divinely ordained, as it were, as a set-off against the surge of Western materialism as well as the unseemly premium put on mere scriptural knowledge divorced from spiritual experience.

Sri Ramakrishna preached the divinity of the soul and repudiated the idea of Original Sin, taking to task even those who called themselves sinners only by way of demonstrating their sense of humility. According to him the Supreme Soul appears in the form of diverse beings. He used to say, 'The soul enchained is man, but when free from the chain, it is the Lord.' His doctrine of the divinity of the soul proceeded not from any scriptural knowledge, but from his own innate and unalloyed way of thinking and realization, thus re-establishing the findings of Hindu philosophies which enjoin on men to regard themselves as children of immortal Bliss—*Amṛtasya Putrāḥ*.

Sri Ramakrishna's sympathy for the suffering humanity was without a parallel. Merely to say that he was sympathetic falls far short of the truth. He was sympathy incarnate and he reached this stage by virtue of his feeling of oneness with all souls. Otherwise, how could the blow dealt by one boatman on the back of another cause as much pain and even as much physical bruise to him as to the victim himself? His attitude to women was truly remarkable. To him every woman was an image of the Divine Mother and so he sanctified the relation between the two sexes by setting an ideal in his own behaviour with Mother Sarada Devi, which constitutes a unique chapter of his holy life. This sublimation in the relation between the two sexes is indispensable even from a utilitarian point of view in the context of the alarming growth in population in modern time.

As expert physician in the treatment of the maladies of human nature, Sri Ramakrishna had his own recipes for their cure. For instance, for the control of the refractory ego in common men, which is at the root of most of their troubles, his injunction was that since it refuses to be eliminated, it should be allowed to remain, but to remain as a servant of God and not as an autocratic and wild embodiment of pride and desires.

He was all eager to help men rise above selfishness in spheres both spiritual and mundane. So far as spirituality is concerned, to people who sought their salvation only through prayers and worship without caring for the world they lived in, his injunction, when put in the language of Wordsworth, was to be true to the kindred points of heaven and home, but in a higher and wider sense. It was at his behest during a tour of pilgrimage with Babu Mathuranath Biswas that the latter was prompted to make provision for food and clothing for a number of hungry and ragged people of aboriginal origin and to have their tangled hair treated with oil. It was his well-known admonition to Narendranath hankering after the divine bliss of *Samādhi*, that blessed the world with the philanthropic Vivekananda whose burning sympathy for the suffering millions found its outburst in his words:

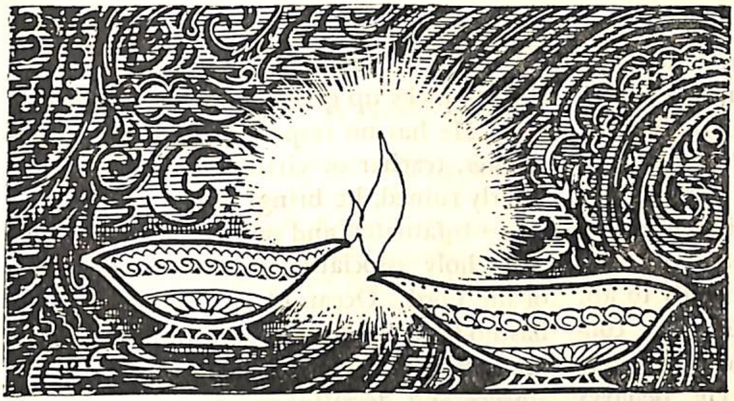
> 'These are His manifold forms before thee,
> Rejecting them, where seekest thou for God?
> Who loves all beings, without distinction,
> He indeed is worshipping best his God.'

In respect of secular life, on the other hand, his injunction to people mad after earthly loaves and fishes was to live in the world unpolluted by it just like the fish that remains untarnished by the clay it lives in. But how to do this? As a means to that end he suggested that in the game of life, man should be in constant and safe touch with the inviolable post or pillar and

twirl round it without the fear of being caught out, meaning thereby that man should go on doing his round of worldly duties with God as the centre and his mind linked to Him. When this attitude is developed in a man, to his understanding science and religion no more contradict each other than light and electricity and it serves as a check on him from giving himself up, like Goethe's Faust, to Mephistopheles, the Tempter. It also enables him to develop a feeling of non-attachment and the power to maintain a nonchalant attitude in weal and woe, prosperity and adversity, triumphs and reverses alike. This attitude of the mind has been described in the Bhagavad-Gītā as Yoga and commended as the secret of work. By this reliance on God, however, Sri Ramakrishna did not mean a passive attitude towards life. His instructions rather impelled man to action urging on him to hoist the sail of his life's vessel if he would avail himself of the wind of divine grace that is ever blowing.

Sri Ramakrishna came to the world not to impose any patent form of worship on any one nor to add to the number of denominational religions. The true function of a religion is to purify the heart. But mere theoretical knowledge of religion without spiritual experience can no more do it than painted fire can burn or the sight of water cleanse. He, therefore, encouraged all to live the life according to their professed creed in order to sanctify and thus broaden their heart for a sympathetic understanding of and a feeling of tolerance for people professing other religions. He himself lived by turn the life prescribed by the different creeds of Hinduism as well as by most other important religions and attained fulfilment in each. In this practical way he came to the realization that the same Supreme Being reveals Itself like the chameleon in different colours to different people and the same goal is the objective of all religions even as the same wide ocean is the destination of all rivers. Thus with the courage of conviction born of personal experience he propounded the epoch-making maxim 'There are as many ways of fulfilment as there are faiths'—'*yata mat, tata path*'. On this co-ordinating thread he sought to string together the gems of different religions. Thus though he did not set up any denominational religion, he may indeed be regarded as the founder of harmony of religions for co-operation and mutual understanding among warring faiths.

At the present time when the country, nay, the entire world is in a state of disintegration owing to ideological differences and the insistence of one section of people to impose its own will on another, this nostrum of mutual tolerance and accommodation, though it originally concerns religions, may be usefully applied for effecting the emotional integration of our nation as well as of the whole human race.



ILLUMINATING DIALOGUES FROM INDIAN LORE

ON WHAT MAKES FOR TRUE NOBILITY

One day Śrī Rāma, accompanied by his brothers and his devoted servant, Hanumāna, went to a beautiful garden full of blossoming trees and creepers at the outskirts of Ayodhyā. At that time sage Sanaka and his three brothers[1] arrived there. These sages were reputed for their high spiritual attainments, blissful nature, same-sightedness. They cherished a desire to sing and hear the glories of Śrī Rāma.

Śrī Rāma himself received them in all joy and prostrated himself before them. After enquiring of their welfare, Śrī Rāma requested them to take their seats.

All the brothers of Śrī Rāma and Hanumāna bowed low in reverence before the sages. Beholding the incomparable beauty of Śrī Rāma, the sages were overwhelmed with ecstasy and praised him : 'O Almighty Lord, infinite, sinless, who is One as well as many, glory unto thee, Knower of Truth and supporter of the earth, you are manifest as all and dwell in the hearts of all beings as their inner guide. O Rāma, please grant us a boon that we may have undying love and devotion to you.'

Śrī Rāma, too, was very happy and expressed that it was his good fortune to be in their holy company which is a sure road to emancipation.

Extolling Śrī Rāma's glorious deeds and praising him again and again the sages bowed their heads with love before him and returned to their abode.

When Sanaka and his brothers departed, Bharata clasped Śrī Rāma's feet and said : O Rāma, the Vedas and the Purāṇas sing the glories of saints in various ways. You too have praised them and have great love for them. Please be gracious and tell me explicitly the characteristics of saints and the wicked men.

Śrī Rāma said : Dear brother, hear me. Innumerable are the characteristics of saints diversely narrated in the Vedas and the Puraṇas. Saints can be compared to sandalwood and the wicked to an axe. As an axe hews down a sandal-wood tree 'but in the act gets perfumed, so, even when a wicked man injures a holy person, he gets in return only good qualities of him. See how their contrary natures lead to different results : the sandalwood (in the form of paste) is offered to the God and is loved by all in the world, while an axe is heated red-hot and is beaten mercilessly with hammer as a punishment.

The saint has no hankering for sense-pleasures and is a mine of virtues. He is happy in the happiness of others and suffers in their suffering. Even-minded, he has no enmity towards anyone. Having con-

[1] Sanandana, Sanātana and Sanatkumāra.

quered greed, avarice, fear and enjoyment of the senses, he, a man of renunciation, has no desires and vanity. Tender-hearted, he is compassionate to people in distress. He is devoted to me in thought, word and deed. He who respects one and all but never claims any honour for himself is very dear to me. Humble, calm and blissful, he is devoted to my name. Friendly to all, he is guileless and placid. He has controlled his mind and senses and is steadfast in his spiritual practices. He behaves gently towards all and never speaks harshly to anyone. He who is same in praise and blame and has love for me—such a person is dear to me as my own life for, he is an abode of noble qualities and embodiment of bliss. Dear Bharata, these are the characteristics of the saint.

Now I shall tell the nature of the wicked. But, dear, be careful that you do not associate, even by mistake, with the wicked because such an association always results in suffering. The heart of the wicked burns with envy at the well-being of others. When he hears, by a chance, a sharp criticism of others, his delight knows no bounds, as if he has received immense wealth. The wicked is sensuous, greedy and short-tempered. His ways of dealings with others are crooked and his heart is impure, deceitful and without mercy. He bears enmity towards all without any cause. To one who does good to him, he does only evil. His actions and even his own behaviour are filled, as it were, with falsehood. He talks sweet words but is hard-hearted. Full of lust, he looks on others' wives with an evil eye. He covets others' wealth and is happy in slandering them. Such vile and sinful men are veritable demons in human forms. Ever wallowing in greed, he is given to creature comforts and gluttony. If anyone is ever praised before him, he resents bitterly heaving deep sighs. If he sees anyone in calamity, he greatly rejoices at it. Devoted to his selfish interests, he picks up quarrels with his kith and kin. He has no respect for his father and mother, teacher or virtuous men. Himself utterly ruined, he brings others to the same fate. Infatuated and malignant, he neither seeks holy association nor utters the name of the Lord. Ocean of vice, dull-witted, he has no faith in sacred scriptures. He makes an outward show of saintliness but is insincere and deceitful inside.

Brother, I shall tell you the essence of all scriptures: there is no virtue like doing good to others and no vice like injuring them. This secret is known to wise men. Those who inflict pain on others have to go through this eternal round of birth and death. Unintelligent and self-centred, the wicked man commits various sins and ruins his prospects for the higher worlds. Realizing that I, as the Lord (in the form of Yama) dispense to human beings the fruits of their good and evil actions, intelligent people adore me. Knowing full well the painful nature of this relative existence, saints and wise men renounce actions which produce good and bad results and take refuge in me. Dear Bharata, I have told you clearly about the saints and the wicked men. One who understands these becomes free from the shackles of worldliness.

Listen, dear brother, the numerous good and bad qualities are all products of Māyā. The greatest virtue is not to notice either of them but to transcend them both. But to discern them is surely an act of ignorance.

All the brothers were very happy to hear these living and instructive words of Śrī Rāma. Their hearts overflowed with love and joy. After some time, Śrī Rāma and others returned to the palace.

—*Sañjaya*

Source: *Rāmacaritamānasa,* Uttara-kāṇḍa.

THE PARLIAMENT OF RELIGIONS 1893

A Newly-discovered First-hand Report

THE REV. H. R. HAWEIS

The Rev. Hugh Reginald Haweis (1838-1901) was a clergyman of the Church of England. A highly popular preacher of his time, he was also a man of insight. He was noted for his unorthodox and broadminded views. He attended the 1893 World Parliament of Religions at Chicago as an unofficial delegate of the Anglican Church. Below are extracts, reproduced unaltered, from Volume I of his book *Travel and Talk*. They form a newly discovered and interesting report of that great meeting of the world faiths. His comments on Swami Vivekananda will be of interest to our readers.

MY SECOND VOYAGE.—On leaving America for England in 1885, after my excursion into Canada, my visit to the Eastern Universities, and my delivery of the Lowell Lectures at Boston, I fully meant to return. But I required some sort of call. In 1893 that call came. I received one morning a strange circular of a more or less Utopian character. It was signed by the Rev. John Henry Barrows, a Presbyterian minister at Chicago.

Chicago was preparing for her big World's Fair. It was, without exaggeration, to be, in the words of the late Mr. Barnum, 'the greatest show on airth.'

It occurred to Dr. Barrows that a 'Parliament of the World's Religions,' to meet in the heart of Chicago, would be a suitable counterpoise or counterdemonstration to the great Parliament of Commerce that was to show off its wares in the fairy city seven miles distant on the shores of the Michigan Lake. I was invited to be one of the Anglican delegates in that strange Parliament—whereof more anon. I decided to go.

As a rule, whenever Christians assemble together to debate their differences, even now they almost come to blows, and formerly they used to burn each other. But here at last in Chicago, in the year of our Lord 1893 under a Christian presidency, Hindu, Parsee, Chinese, Cingalese, Catholic and Protestant met together for the first time in history to rehearse their beliefs instead of to harp on their differences; to affirm, instead of to deny; to construct, instead of to destroy.

Although the notion that such a gathering was merely an attempt to Barnumise religion in the interests of the World's Fair, is a view eminently characteristic of the insular conceit and ignorance of the British clergy, yet the most enlightened and farseeing ecclesiastic could hardly have anticipated the majestic proportions which the Religious Parliament was destined to assume, and probably the acute Pope Leo XIII alone amongst the rulers of Christendom rightly gauged the importance of the Parliament and the necessity of the Roman Catholic Church being properly represented there.

In reality the Parliament had nothing whatever to do with the great show seven miles away. Its deliberations belonged to a very different atmosphere; and certainly there was no remote touch of the Industrial Exhibition or the 'Plaisance' about it, except the crowds that swarmed to its sittings.

Let me try, ere the impressive vision fades entirely from my mental retina, to recall a glimpse of one of those memorable and spectacular debates.

THE PARLIAMENT.—In the centre of the great material, pork-purveying, money-

grabbing city of Chicago—seven miles from the World's Fair—is opened the Hall of Columbus, where *three times a day* an excited crowd scrambles for the 3,000 seats, whilst hundreds are on each occasion daily excluded, and this continues for sixteen days without abatement.

An Episcopal bishop or a Presbyterian minister is in the chair. As I sit on the platform I can see through a window the dense crowds waiting outside who will never get in.

At a signal all doors are closed, and the half-hour papers and speeches, 'Theology of Judaism,' 'Hinduism,' 'Existence of God,' 'Immortality,' etc., follow in quick succession. The Archbishop of Zante, in flowing robes, gives an address on the Greek Church; a Catholic bishop, Cardinal Gibbons, shows the needs of man supplied by the Catholic Church; the eloquent mystic Mazoomda in excellent English pours forth a eulogy on the Bramo-Somaj; the Archimandrite from Damascus, who boasts that he has never spent a penny, not only addressed the meeting, but sat every day—sometimes, it is true, asleep—through all the speeches. The names of Canon (now Dean) Fremantle, Professor Max Müller, Professor Henry Drummond, Lyman Abbott, Dr. Momerie, and the leading lights of all the American universities, sufficiently show the representative and influential support given to the Religious Parliament; but to see the absorbed attention of these Chicago crowds day after day riveted on the discussion of abstruse religious and theological questions was a more impressive sight even than the Orientals in scarlet and orange-coloured robes and white turbans, or the galaxy of distinguished speakers and teachers whose names are known throughout the civilised world.

Nothing succeeds like success, and all of us who attended these earnest and enthusiastic meetings seemed to feel that the Chicago religious demonstration, with its cosmopolitan cry for unity and its practical plan for toleration, would leave a mark upon Christendom resembling, though differing from, the new departure created by the Protestant Reformation.

In listening to the eloquent Dharmapala of Ceylon, and the subtle and incisive utterances of the gorgeously robed Swami (Master) Vivekananda, it dawned upon many for the first time that so much high Christianity having been taught before Christ did not cheapen the Christian religion, but merely pointed to the Divine source from which both it and every other devout and noble teaching has come.

Clearer and clearer every day, as we listened to the accredited teachers of the world's religions, did we perceive the everlastingly recurrent ideas, pure and simple, which underlie and vitalise all religious systems—God, the Soul, Sacrifice, Revelation, Divine Communion—clearer every day seemed to stand out the supremacy of the Christian ideal, and the unique work and personality of Jesus. A few notes of discord served only to throw up into higher relief the predominant keynote of brotherhood. The Rev. Joseph Cook, of Boston, or, as some called him, the Rev. 'Cocksure' Cook, in proclaiming his 'Christian certainties', exhibited an almost archiepiscopal scorn of, and indifference to, all other certainties and religions, but he carried little weight—except that of his own dogmatism, which nearly sank him. Another gentleman raised a storm by intimating that polygamy was by no means an unmitigated evil. He was nevertheless listened to and loudly applauded at the close of his bold defence of Islamism.

Vivekananda, the popular Hindu monk, whose physiognomy bore the most striking resemblance to the classic face of the

Buddha, denounced our commercial prosperity, our bloody wars, and our religious inconsistency, declaring that at such a price the 'mild Hindu' would have none of our vaunted civilisation. The recurrent and rhetorical use of the phrase 'mild Hindu' produced a very singular impression upon the audience, as the furious monk waved his arms and almost foamed at the mouth. 'You come,' he cried, 'with the Bible in one hand and the conqueror's sword in the other—you, with your religion of yesterday, to us, who were taught thousands of years ago by our Richis precepts as noble and lives as holy as your Christ's. You trample on us and treat us like the dust beneath your feet. You destroy precious life in animals. You are *carnivores.* You degrade our people with drink. You insult our women. You scorn our religion—in many points like yours, only better, because more humane. And then you wonder why Christianity makes such slow progress in India. I tell you it is because you are not like your Christ, whom we could honour and reverence. Do you think if you came to our doors like Him, meek and lowly, with a message of love, living and working and suffering for others, as He did, we should turn a deaf ear? Oh, no! We should receive Him and listen to Him, as we have done our own inspired Richis (teachers).' I consider that Vivekananda's personality was one of the most impressive, and his speech one of the most eloquent speeches which dignified the great congress. This remarkable person appeared in England in the autumn of 1895, and although he led a very retired life, attracted numbers of people to his lodgings, and created everywhere a very deep impression. He seemed completely indifferent to money, and lived only for thought. He took quite simply anything that was given him, and when nothing came he went without, yet he never seemed to lack anything; he lived by faith from day to day, and taught Yogi science to all who would listen, without money and without price. His bright orange flowing robe and white turban recalled forcibly the princely Magians who visited the birthplace of the Divine Babe. The Orientalists at the Congress supported each other admirably, not only from a scenic, but also from a controversial point of view.

Dharmapala, the Buddhist ascetic, in white robes and jet-black hair, followed Vivekananda, and, speaking in the same sense, denounced the missionaries. This brought up a gentleman in Chinese costume, an English missionary, who spoke up for his class with great ability and fire, intimating at the same time that the missionaries were far in advance of the missionary societies who sent them out. These, he said, were often narrow and intolerant; but the true Christian missionary knew how to value the native religions, and went out, not to denounce them, but to preach what was positive in his own, and to help the people to better knowledge and nobler lives. His class were, he declared, as a rule, not the idiots and self-indulgent idlers that had been described, but God-fearing and self-sacrificing men.

All the Orientalists fell bitterly on the pork butcher of Chicago, and on meat-eating generally. 'If you cannot give life,' said Mazoomda, 'at least, for pity's sake, do not take it.' Their utterances, however, failed to bear conviction to pig-killing, sausage-loving Chicago.

But on the whole, the message to the world from the World's Parliament of Religions has been peace to all that are near, and all that are afar off.

Indeed, it is time to proclaim the essential unity of all religions—they conflict only in their accidents. The 'broken lights'

bear witness to the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world—nay, are parts of that Light as much as the colours in the prism are parts of the sunlight. Henceforth to accept Christ the rejection of all the teachers that went before Him is not necessary, and to receive Christianity need not carry with it the dogma that all other religions are in all parts false.

Last, not least, people may feel together even when they cannot think or believe alike, and there may be 'difference of administration,' and yet 'the same spirit'. The brotherhood of man transcends all the 'isms,' even as Christ is greater than Christianity, and Religion than the Churches.

These are some of the voices from Chicago, which no scorn of the world can daunt, and no indifference of the Church will be able to silence.

UNITY, DIVERSITY AND UNIVERSALITY IN RELIGION

Dr. Preston Bradley

Though I was a young lad at that time, I have a very distinct memory of seeing, standing upon the platform (of the Parliament of Religion in Chicago in 1893), and of listening to the words of, the immortal Vivekananda. They impressed me greatly later in my youth, and I think had a great deal to do with the attitude I have taken in the fifty-eight years that I have stood in one pulpit in the City of Chicago. I begin, one week from today, I think it is my fifty-eighth year in the pulpit. I wish it were my fifty-eighth year of age, but it isn't : it is my eighty-second. And I realize, being a realist,—and I think being realistic is one of the primary philosophical attitudes in any human life—, that whatever time that is left for me on this plane of consciousness in which to make any contribution which I can to the solution of these difficult and dangerous problems which have settled down upon a frustrated, confused, disturbed world, I have got to take advantage of. Every opportunity given me must be taken, to make my little contribution, because it is the sunset of my life. 'One must wait for the evening to know how beautiful the day has been.' But I must do whatever I can and say whatever I can say quickly, for the sands of time are running out in the hourglass of my life.

So when I received the invitation from your Swami, I accepted it gladly. I didn't know what contribution I could make but I wanted to come out here and share with you in the historical event that changed the philosophic and theological thinking of the world in 1893. Then later on, we had, as some of you recall, our Century of Progress here in the City of Chicago which was called the World's Fair ; it was the second World's Fair. And in that Century of Progress here, we had a day devoted to religion. We had a building devoted to it in the Century of Progress down on the lake front and every representative of every faith was invited to participate in a series of conferences and discussions and exchange ideas about the place of religion in the life of the world. And I was honoured at that event by being invited to represent my tradition which is the Protestant Christian tradition. That is my tradition, and I was invited to present my ideas in the light of that tradition, to

this assembly in 1933. I accepted that responsibility gladly.

Now when you have lived a long time on the physical basis, two things always happen. The first is you have lived long enough to find experience and history compelling you to do some rethinking. It challenges you by saying: Are you right ? Or, are you wrong ? And experience and history become the necessary media by which you are compelled to do some rethinking. Now it never happens to youth, because youth has had neither experience nor history. Much of their attitude is based purely upon an emotional expression; but when you consider history and experience you are compelled, as you grow old, to do some rethinking. You are compelled to listen to the reaction of your own thoughts, and you are compelled to do one of two things: either to repudiate some of your ideas when truth speaks and experience authenticates; or you are given the exhilaration, almost to the point of ecstasy, that you have been right.

Now I have reached that point in my life where I have been compelled to reorganize and readjust much of my thinking. I have had to pass through an examination in the light of myself. And it is one of the most difficult things in the world: self-examination. One of the most difficult things a person can do in this world is to look into the mirror and analyse themselves and say: What kind of a man are you ? What kind of a person are you ?

Talking to your self, to the deepest recesses of your own personality, and self-examination, are the very basis of any form of redemption. It is I that make the self-examination. Other people don't have to do it for you. They do plenty of that without your will. Other people are very glib in expressing themselves about you. What kind of a person you are, who you are, and who you think you are, and all the rest of it. You don't have to worry about that. There will be plenty of examination of you. That takes place all the time. But the important examination is the self-examination. And if you are to get any remedial help from self-examination, you must be honest with yourself. Self-honesty is one of the greatest of virtues. Be honest with yourself. Recognize your own limitations, your own possibilities, your own conduct. Analyse you as you, and not as a member of society or some social force or belonging to some religion or some race or some creed—but you as an identity in the cosmos. For you are more important as an identity than in any social relationship you will ever have—you, not anyone else but you. That is why, to me, any religion which emphasizes the importance, the value, the purpose of the individual soul is of great moment.

I was born in the latter part of the 19th century, and I have lived through most of the 20th century. I shall never see the 21st century. There are young people in this room who will. You will see the 21st century. I shall be denied it on this plane, but you will see it and it is going to be your century. And you are going to do what you choose to do with that century. You're going to be electing the politicians, you're going to be writing the books, you're going to be preaching the sermons, you're going to be writing the editorials, you're going to be the creator of that century which I shall never know. I want you to meet that responsibility. I don't want you to fail civilization as some of my generation has failed. I am speaking constantly to universities and colleges—commencement addresses,—and to young people all around the world. I have just returned from my 68th crossing of the Atlantic. I've met young people in six continents and I have been completely around the world twice.

We just left quite recently Belfast in

Ireland. And if you want to see a place where pure bigotry, pure bigotry, prevails, both on the side of the Protestant and on the side of the Roman Catholics, go to Northern Ireland. I spoke twice in Belfast. I had a tremendous audience, and when I was through on that Sunday evening, right in the heart of Belfast, at All Saints Church on Almond Avenue, that congregation was one in its response to the appeal that I made to eliminate bigotry. That is the problem before religion—bigotry. More blood has been shed in the name of religion than of any other thing in human history. And how these Christians can murder each other, and burn their homes, and slay each other, and destroy in the name of God!

I have never accepted the anthropomorphic concept of God. A God shaped and modelled in human terms is to me a God I could never worship. To me your ancient scriptures in the Hindu emphasis, my ancient scriptures in the Christian emphasis, have a definition of God, and the only definition I know; I don't know any others. Theologians, philosophers, scientists, are saying many things about God these days; some are even saying He is dead. That is the heritage of the anthropomorphic concept of God being a man. The ancient Bible in my tradition gives a definition and your literature is filled with it. The sensitive souls who see beyond the barriers of race and creed and colour, out onto the high plateau of common humanity, have said it again and again. The ancient book says only this, and there are just three words in this definition of God: 'God is Love.' It is the only definition I know. I don't want to enter into any metaphysical effort for penetrating the great unfathomable truths and realities; but when you say 'God is Love,' I can understand that, for I have loved and I have been loved. And when they tell me God is love I can comprehend that. And I don't think that this stricken, tortured world in which you and I are living, needs anything more than it needs a realization that there lies the solution for all of our problems, for all of our difficulties,—racial, colour-blindness, nationalism, etc. I don't think that we have any other need than love. Love is the only answer.

We have tried everything else for four or five thousand years. We have tried big armies and big navies. We have tried nationalism. We have tried leagues of nations and United Nations; we have tried world conferences; we have been trying and trying in the mechanics and we lost the spirit. And we shall never do it without the realization of the power of love. When that realization comes, it will be a Nirvāna for the world. I think that is the supreme business of religion. I don't think religion —any religion, Christianity, Hinduism, or any other—has any other business now; none—it is too late. Religion as religion has no other business now. None, except to generate love in the hearts of people. And a Church that doesn't do that is doomed. A religion that doesn't do that is doomed. I don't care what you call the religion, it is going to fail.

Obviously, what is the matter with us is not ignorance. Man knows more today about everything than he has ever known in the seven or eight hundred million years he's been working in the evolutionary process of life. He knows more today. Ignorance is not our difficulty. He knows more about himself than he has ever known. He knows more about his brain, knows more about his heart. Man knows more about the human heart today than he has ever known. He knows more about the physical constitution of his body than he has ever known. He knows more about the universe, of which he is a part, than he has ever known. We are fondling some cold grey stones that came from the moon, as tangible evidence of the physical structure of the moon. We

know more about space than we have ever known. Man has been higher and deeper than he has ever been in his travel in the cosmos. He has made a parking space in the sky. He has charted the bottom of the sea. He presses a button and lighteth a continent. I stand in my pulpit every Sunday and speak into one of these little bits of tin. Through my radio, my boys in North Korea and Vietnam can hear me in a sentence, catch my breath, before the last person in the balcony of my church can hear me through our short-wave.

That is what the mind of man has done with sound. There are no distances any more; Moscow, Paris, Calcutta—no further away than the ether waves in this room. They are all here now. Man knows more about his world than he has ever known. Whispers go around the globe. There are no mountains, there are no seas. For the first time in the history of the evolution of the earth, the earth has been seen by the eyes of men thousands of miles away. No, ignorance is not our problem. We know how to marshal energy, we know how to project, we understand the depth of science, and we have only just begun. The end is not yet. I tremble at what some of you young people are going to see in the next 25 to 50 years—years which I shall never know. But you will and you may go back to this moment and remember. Now man knows more about everything than he has ever known. He can fly and discover and promote and organize the mechanics of government. Watch the constant processions of political leaders that pass, come and go on the stage of human government. Man can do all of this.

But I want to ask you a question. If the mind of man can do what it has done, will somebody please tell me why the mind of man isn't big enough so that we can find a way to live together in our own block? What happens to this mind of man, that he can do everything he has done and then hate someone because they are of a different colour or a different religion? That is the childishness of humanity. And the only way that that will be remedied will not be by strikes, nor violence, nor burning, nor looting, nor noise, nor confusion. Violence breeds violence. I knew one of the greatest men; he was a mentor of mine in the early years of my own studies, and that was the immortal Gandhi. I stood at his bier in India with that cluster of ashes, venerated and loved by millions. His philosophy of love, the same philosophy that Martin Luther King tried to instill in his devotees and followers, has been tragically prostituted and forgotten under the pressures of a mechanistic society.

I wish I were 25 today. I wish I had 50 years of this unknown tomorrow. For I believe that the pendulum will begin to swing. I think that there are already evidences that it is. People are increasingly becoming disillusioned with force and power and money and prestige as the final determining factors of our civilization. I look for a spiritual revival. I do not mean a revival of any particular sect or creed I am not using the term in relation to activities like those of Billy Graham—the upheaval of a big emotional experience for two or three weeks and then it all fades out into nothingness. I am not talking about that kind of revival. I'm talking about the revival of which I think there are many evidences that it is on the way. I think there are going to break forth voices that you have never heard, in every country on earth, both sides of the iron curtain—China, and Germany, East Germany, the Soviet Union. You are going to see in the next 25—certainly 50—years a changed attitude. People who pay the biggest price in war and receive the least in peace are going to get tired of it all. This extremism is going

to turn on itself. Extremism in hate, extremism in society, is going to turn on itself. And you are going to find leaders and voices arising in every culture, in every nation, in every race in our world, that will represent the higher unity of civilization. I shall not see it. But to a student of history the inevitable reaction is obvious. Man goes just so far, just so far—he always has—and then open the doors of God, if you want to call it that. I call it the creative intelligence of the cosmos. The inevitable response begins to operate ; and man sees how stupid and foolish and incompetent he was.

God created man for a great purpose. Human life is about something. The biggest thing, you know, is that we were created for a purpose ; that is why to me there aren't any unimportant people. I don't know any unimportant people. To me there aren't any. Each individual, each one, has depth of self-importance. Life to him is precious. He'll fight for it. He'll fight for that life. He will defend himself in every experience. Life is important. That's why to me there aren't any unimportant people. I don't know any unimportant people. Each person is important. Each person is a spark of divine energy. No matter what he does, no matter how bad he is, no matter how he has prostituted life, no matter what he has done with it. Somewhere in the heart and the soul of that individual is a divine spark. And if that can be lighted and inspired the life changes. To me that's conversion. That's what Christianity has been seeking for two thousand years, and it is as simple as that. That's conversion. God created man—created him for a purpose.

But finally, the most important thing of all: not only did He create man, not only did He create him for a purpose, but he endowed man with the potential to achieve his purpose. We're not playthings in the hands of some divine jester who sits off on a cloud somewhere with the puppet strings. That isn't man. Man is endowed. These hopes, motivations, dreams, aspirations, are all *prima facie* evidences to me that he has a potential. And in getting a hold of that potential, human life becomes significant and important. Any religion that teaches that, is a surviving religion. Any religion that doesn't, is dead.

Religion based on sectarianism is having the greatest challenge of its life. Christianity never was in the trouble it is in today. Christianity is having more trouble than it has ever had in all of its history. The Roman Catholic Church is split right down the middle as it hasn't been in the whole history of the church. The Protestant world is confused and bewildered. Organized established Christianity has failed.

But the heart and the soul of true Hinduism and true Christianity—and I do not see these religions in opposition to each other—the fundamental truth, is true. I don't care whether you call it Christianity or Hinduism, or what you call it. You cannot label truth with a definition that limits truth. Truth is unlimited. And when the great heart of man which reflects the heart of God gets back to that fundamental basis, you're going to see a different world. And I think that world is on the way. There is a spiritual revival at work in the souls of men. We are at last going to come out of the nightmare, into the dream that your prophets have stood for in this great ideal of unity in diversity. We'll come out of the nightmare into the dream. And what is that dream ? The dream of every prophetic soul in every culture of man, is to build a world in which man will find his way back again to dignity, to greatness and to peace.

THE MISSION OF PHILOSOPHY

Sri B. K. Nema

Empirical consciousness is confined within the sphere of subject-object dualism. There is nothing distinctively human about this type of knowledge. Gifted with the powers of the intellect and intuition human beings rise from the rugged plane of sheer object awareness to that of science and philosophy. At the level of philosophical thinking an effort is made to transgress the limitations of ordinary knowledge.

Philosophical thinking takes a critical view of common sense. Ordinary knowledge takes for granted the diversity and independence of the subject and the object. Philosophical approach involves a critical probe into the entire subject-object complex to test the validity of this assumption.

Philosophy aims to transcend the duality inherent in empirical consciousness. However, it is dependent for its development and fruition upon the same consciousness. The subject-object distinction serves as the starting point of the philosophical quest. Philosophic enquiry may be, therefore, either subject-oriented or object-oriented. Since mind like the eye is directed easily towards other things than itself, the object-oriented approach seems to be the more natural one. The two approaches however, are not incompatible, they are rather complementary to each other.

The external world impresses man with its vastness and variety, beauty and harmony. The complex nature of things arouses curiosity about their origin, cause, sustaining force, ultimate end etc. 'What is the cause?' he asks, 'Whence are we born? By what do we live? And on what are we established? Presided over by whom do we live our different conditions in pleasure and pain? Time, inherent nature, necessity, chance, the elements, the womb or the person, should they be considered as the cause?'[1]

Self-awareness, on the other hand, leaves man equally perplexed concerning his own personality. The nature and functioning of the various elements in his personality he finds almost inscrutable. He wonders 'By whom willed and directed does the mind light on its objects? By whom commanded does life the first, move? At whose will do people utter speech? And, what God is it that prompts the eye and the ear?'[2]

Such questions we cannot escape for long. Sooner or later man realizes the inadequacy of everyday knowledge. The acquisitions of the senses and the mind do not appease the spirit. Empirical knowledge suffers from serious limitations. Being confined to the spatio-temporal phenomena it holds good only within the relevant space-time framework. Such knowledge is also relational. Things and events become intelligible only through comparative assessment and the determination of causal sequence. Besides, knowledge at the empirical level is under a constant process of revision. Lack of finality in empirical knowledge is a clear proof of its inadequacy.

This has been well brought out by Śaṅkara in his critique of the empirical knowledge with which he prefaces his commentary on the *Brahma-Sūtras*. Therein, he points out that the ordinary knowledge is an admixture of the true and the false. It pertains to the realm of the unreal. In

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1 *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, I. 1.

2 *Kena Upaniṣad*, I. 1.

respect of it man is no better than animals. 'The empirical usage relating to means and objects of valid knowledge in the case of man is similar to that of beasts. And for beasts etc. it is well known that empirical usage relating to perception etc. comes in the wake of non-discrimination.'[3] This non-discrimination leads to superimposition or *adhyāsa*. The nature and the characteristics of the subject are attributed to the object and *vice versa*. The sense of 'me' and 'mine' determines our attitude to the things of the world. They come to be regarded as the very basis of our enjoyment and existence. We get attached to them and suffer on their account. Even so, the self is conceived to be no better than the transient things of the world, as subject to change, decay and death. A terrible fear of death and annihilation pervades our life and makes it a 'general drama of pain'.

The ignorance which causes this can only be counteracted by true knowledge. An effort is called for, to seek and realize the ultimate principle of all existence, the essence of all things. Unalloyed bliss cannot be achieved at the psycho-physical plane through the empirical knowledge. Transcendental knowledge alone can bring about the spiritual upliftment and the final beatitude.

The spirit yearns for something 'more', it craves for a fuller life. Nothing but the highest and the complete truth can set it at rest. Though the body is tied to the earth, the spirit always looks beyond. Man is finite and earthy but he craves for the infinite, the transcendental and the immortal.

To this end, man has probed the innermost core of the subject-object complex, analysed the essential nature of things, discriminated between the apparent and the real, the true and the false, the good and the evil. This search for the real, quest of the truth, and the effort to realize the good and the beautiful is the mission of philosophy. Philosophy tries to find out the essential and all pervading principle in the things, the primal substance at the root of the universe. It is the search for ultimate reality, an effort to have a vision of the absolute truth.

Those who take the veracity of the empirical knowledge for granted do not believe in a reality beyond the sphere of experience. Experience, according to them, is real and should be accepted as such. There is no need to go beyond it. 'Ultimate' and 'absolute' conceived as independent of experience are unwarranted assumptions. This stand is taken generally by the atheists, materialists, positivists and hedonists.

But a critical approach reveals very soon that there are contradictions galore in empirical knowledge. One experience is contradicted and sublated by another. All experiences have a predominant subjective element in them. Consequently, we know the world only as it appears to us and not as it actually is. Besides, the relational nature of empirical truths makes them contingent. Truth which is probable and likely to be false, and reality of such a nature that it can be dispensed with, are sheer contradictions in terms. The concepts of 'absolute truth' and 'ultimate reality' are logical necessities.

This transcendental reality is not fettered by the space-time-causality framework. It is unconditioned and infinite, above all quantitative and qualitative distinctions. It is the prius of all existence. It can be one and one alone.

The awareness of one Reality constitu-

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3 *Śaṅkara's Commentary on Brahma-Sūtras*, Introduction.

ting the warp and woof of the entire universe had dawned quite early upon Indian thinkers. But at first it was conceived as something out there, and referred to in impersonal terms. Closer intimate relationship with it had not developed. This can only be considered as the natural outcome of the initial objective approach. Its antithesis was arrived at through the subjective approach. Instead of looking without, the search for the ultimate reality was directed within. Consequently, everything was treated as hinging upon the Ātman. Before long, however, Indian thinkers arrived at the higher truth when they accepted that Ātman and Brahman are non-different. The ultimate reality within and without is one and the same.

To seek that ultimate principle, the same within and without, which pervades the subject-object complex is the task of philosophy. Upaniṣads say that by knowing it everything becomes known, 'the unhearable becomes heard, the unperceivable becomes perceived and the unknowable becomes known.'[4] That Brahman or Ātman, call it by any name, should be heard, meditated upon and realized.

Philosophical knowledge and spiritual discipline bring about that realization and through it liberation from finitude and suffering.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

IN THIS NUMBER

The words quoted in 'Onward For Ever!' occur in *The Complete Works,* Vol. VI, 1956, p. 98-99.

For being able to make meaning out of life and for attaining self-fulfilment, what we most urgently need today everywhere in the world is the development of the inner spiritual resources of man by the side of planned development of the material resources of man going on in the world. The editorial of this month is devoted to Śrī Rāma, from whom man can derive the greatest help for developing his inner spiritual resources.

'Exhortation to the youth of India' containing the precious and helpful words of Swami Vireswarananda, the President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, is reproduced here from the Ashrama Souvenir 1969 of the Sri Ramakrishna Advaita Ashrama, Kalady by kind permission of the President of the Ashrama.

Swami Prabhavananda, a senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order and the Head of the Vedanta Society of Southern California in Hollywood, in this article thoughtfully inculcates the supreme goal of life which one must reach for attaining self-fulfilment.

Sri Ramakrishna brings to mankind the happy tidings that even the lowest of us has a Mother, who is all-powerful and overflowing with love. Swami Tapasyananda, a senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order, emphasizes this message in the concluding part of his article, 'Motherhood of God as Revealed by Sri Ramakrishna.'

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4 *Chāndogya Upaniṣad,* VI. I. 3.

Sri Kailas Chandra Kar, Retired Headmaster, Laban Bengalee Boys' High School, Shillong, in his article 'A Few Words on the Epiphany and Greatness of Sri Ramakrishna' points out that 'the unsophisticated life and gospel of Sri Ramakrishna ... have a spontaneous appeal to our heart' at the present time.

In the 'Illuminating Dialogue' of this month Sañjaya presents Śrī Rāma's teachings to Bharata on the characteristics of saints and wicked men.

To unearth previously unknown sentences of Swami Vivekananda, or fresh first-hand accounts of events in which he was involved, is an important matter for his admirers and followers. As far as fresh sentences of his go, we have in 'The Parliament of Religions 1893: A New-discovered First-hand Report' only a paragraph, but it shows Swamiji fearless, speaking straight from the shoulder, and saying something that needed saying. It has long been known that he made a few speeches at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago, other than those recorded and published as such. It may have been in one of these that the remarks heard by the Rev. H. R. Haweis were made.

Something about Mr. Haweis has been said in a note preceding the extracts from his book. We are indebted to the Editor of *Vedanta for East and West,* the bi-monthly journal published by the Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre of London, for sharing this find with *Prabuddha Bharata.*

Dr. Preston Bradley founded and has been the Pastor of the People's Church of Chicago for over 56 years. He has for many years preached every summer in England and Ireland and frequently in Denmark. The present article is adapted from a speech he gave on September 14, 1969 commemorating the 76th anniversary of the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893 at the Vivekananda Vedanta Society of Chicago.

Sri B. K. Nema is a lecturer in the Department of Philosophy, Birla Institute of Technology and Science, Pilani, Rajasthan, India. In his article 'The Mission of Philosophy' he points out that to seek the 'ultimate principle, the same within and without, which pervades the subject-object complex is the task of philosophy'.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

SANSKRIT PLAYS FROM EPIC SOURCES: BY H. W. WELLS. M. S. University of Baroda. Pages 258, 1969. Rs. 15/-.

H. W. Wells, till recently of the Drama Museum of the Columbia University, New York, has been responsible for three collections, including the present one, which have supplied useful material designed to meet the increasing interest in Indian Drama evinced in the University and non-University centres in the U.S. The present collection, brought out by the M. S. University of Baroda, which has a full-fledged Drama Department, offers five of the shorter Bhāsa-plays, *Pañcarātra, Dūtaghaṭotkaca, Dūtavākya, Karṇabhara* and *Urubhanga*—and two longer plays, one each of Kālidāsa and Bhavabhūti (the *Vikramorvaśīya* and the *Uttararāmacarita*). Mr. Wells has adopted prose and verse for his translations. In his brief Introduction, he says: 'The historian of dramatic literature would be hard put to discover a form of composition so long-lived as Sanskrit drama.' We welcome this addition to Sanskrit dramatic literature available in English version.

DR. V. RAGHAVAN

PRINCIPLES OF EMPIRICAL REALISM—PHILOSOPHICAL ESSAYS. BY DONALD CARY WILLIAMS, Professor of Philosophy, Harward University, published by Charles C. Thomas, 301-327 East Lawrence Avenue, Springfield, Illinois, U.S.A., 1966, pp. 472, price $4.50.

The essays written between 1938 and 1965 by Prof. D. C. Williams are revised, edited, and carefully brought together in this volume; and they embody what the author and his editor consider to be a valid system of philosophy.

Empiricism believes that we can have valid knowledge of the universe which is different from, and independent of, our perceptions. It holds, moreover, that all knowledge consists of 'conceptual constructions collected from and confirmed by sensory experience'. Even this knowledge is said to be an instance of the same principle. That would, of course, be a case of begging the question; and if one has to avoid it, he must, like Russell, admit that the proposition 'all knowledge is derived from experience' is an *a priori* knowledge. Prof. Williams would prefer the former, and thus agree to become a solipsist. Yet he admits that he became a realist under the spell of Bosanquet.

But what makes Prof. Williams an interesting thinker is that he has a metaphysics and an epistemology. In this he is not deterred by the linguists who are called positivists. He pleads for a fusion of empiricism and realism.

The book is a valuable document reminding us of the permanent problems of philosophy. It makes an excellent reading. Yet one has to admit that Prof. Williams does not offer a convincing refutation of Objective Idealism. Rather, one is made more aware of the value of Objective Idealism.

The printing is excellent and the get-up attractive. Every student of philosophy should go through it, if only to quarrel with Prof. Williams. A student of poetry will certainly find the opening chapter, which is a poem, to be unpoetic; but it is interesting.

DR. P. S. SASTRI

BENGALI

BHAJAN SANGEET (FIRST PART) BY SWAMI CHANDIKANANDA, Sri Sri Matrimandir, P.O. Jayrambati, Dist. Bankura, 2nd Edition with an introduction by Sri S. N. Ratanjankar, Principal, National Academy of Hindusthani Music, Lucknow, Price Rs. 2.50.

The culmination of spiritual movements of the nineteenth century found expression in the lives of Sri Ramakrishna and Holy Mother Sarada Devi. It was only natural that poems and songs were written about them within their lifetime. We can remember the Sanskrit *stotras*, English and Bengali poems, and particularly that famous vesper service song on Sri Ramakrishna by Swami Vivekananda and the Sarada *stotra* along with other Ramakrishna *stotras* by Swami Abhedananda in this respect. There are other poets like Swami Saradananda, Girish Chandra Ghosh, Debendranath Majumdar and Swami Premeshananda who will be remembered by the devotees as well as common people for their exquisite expression of devotional feelings in Bengali songs.

Swami Chandikananda is a follower in this line. Of his numerous songs on Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, Swami Vivekananda and other topics, seventeen songs with notations have been collected in this book under review. Inspired by Swami Vivekananda's mission of manliness, Swami Chandikananda has infused in his songs the bold

message of *Abhiḥ* (fearlessness). Along with this his songs infuse sweet devotion and create an atmosphere of godliness wherever they are sung. Pupils of devotional music will find the notations along with the songs very useful.

PRANAB RANJAN GHOSH

NEWS AND REPORTS

THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION CEYLON BRANCH

REPORT FOR APRIL 1966 TO MARCH 1968

The Colombo Centre: The Colombo Centre, which is the headquarters of the Ceylon Branch of the Ramakrishna Mission, carried on, in addition to the administrative activities, varied cultural and religious activities during the years under review. Besides the regular Pūjā in the Ashrama shrine, religious classes were conducted in the Ashrama and special lectures by eminent persons on various cultural and religious subjects were arranged. Discourses on the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, the *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* were also held twice a week. Sunday religious classes for the children, started in 1952, have now on its roll 575 children. There are 22 teachers to conduct these classes. Sunday religious classes at the Training School for the Juvenile Delinquents at Wattupitiwela, a distance of 30 miles, were continued during the years under review. The birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi, and Swami Vivekananda as well as *Śivarātri*, Wesak, *Vijayā Daśamī* and Christmas Eve were celebrated with due solemnity. The library and free reading room continue to cater to the needs of the public. There are at present 2450 books, 25 monthly and weekly magazines, 2 bi-weekly and 10 daily newspapers in the reading room. The international cultural centre provides accommodation for students with facilities for religious and cultural training, for guests, and for conducting classes on cultural and religious subjects.

The Prime Minister of India Srimati Indira Gandhi visited the Mission on 19th September 1967. His Holiness Srimat Swami Vireswaranandaji Maharaj, the tenth President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission visited the centre on 9th May 1968.

Kataragama Madam: On an average 300 pilgrims to the holy shrines at Kataragama on week days and 700 on week-ends stayed at the Madam. During the annual festival held in July-August free meals were supplied to about 12,000 pilgrims per day continuously for 17 days. Buttermilk and lime juice were also served to nearly 20,000 persons daily during the festival days. Religious lectures, discourses and *Bhajan* were held at Madam during the festival and on other occasions.

Batticaloa Ashrama: Weekly religious classes, temple worship and *Bhajan* were conducted at Mantivu Leper Asylum and prison at Batticaloa. Religious classes were held in the Vipulananda Memorial Hall for the school going children of the locality numbering 425 on Sundays, and *Bhajan* was arranged on Fridays. The Mission conducts a boys' home at Kalladi Uppodai and two girls' homes at Anaipanthy and Karativu. The total strength was 115, of which 45 were girls. These homes provide free boarding, lodging and education to poor orphans and destitute children and train them to be useful citizens. The birthday anniversaries of Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda and other festivals like *Śivarātri*, Wesak, Christmas Eve were celebrated in a befitting manner.

Needs of the Centre:

1. Funds for Swami Vivekananda Centenary Memorial Hall.
2. A permanent fund for the maintenance of the Ashrama and Temple at Colombo.
3. A permanent fund for the Orphanages at Batticaloa.
4. Funds for the construction of a building for the Boys' Orphanage at Batticaloa.
5. Kataragama Madam reserve fund.

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